FRAMING FASHION CURATION:

A theoretical, historical and practical perspective

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Bachelor of Creative Industries (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

2012

Creative Industries Faculty

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Keywords

fashion

curation

exhibition

display

adjunct

site

women

narrative

practice

Abstract

This research project frames an emerging field – fashion curation – through a theoretical, historical, and practical enquiry. Recent decades have seen fashion curation grow rapidly as a form of praxis and an area of academic attention, predominantly in museums and universities. Within this context, two major models for conceptualising the role of the fashion curator have emerged: the institutional and the independent curator. This project proposes and applies a third model: the adjunct fashion curator.

In developing this model my project seeks to move the growing dialogue around fashion curation away from exclusively focusing on the museum. By proposing a third curatorial model for fashion, this research draws on the past of fashion display and exhibition for its context, while simultaneously exploring the adjunct model through my curatorial practice.

The impact of sites of display, the role of gender, and the relationship between art and fashion are explored as pivotal themes in the development of fashion curation and thus provide contextual grounding for the proposal of the adjunct curatorial model. Alongside a theoretical and historical account of fashion curation, I conduct a practice-led inquiry that explores these themes through five exhibition projects and one photographic series.

I argue that the introduction and application of the adjunct model enables curatorial practitioners to sensitively work around the dominant museum model, and circumvent the divide between institutional and independent curation. Introducing the adjunct model allows the curator to develop personalised narratives relating to the experience of fashion and clothing as an exhibited phenomenon in a variety of institutional and non-institutional sites. Hence this research project contributes to a developing field by proposing a valuable and nuanced model for fashion curation.

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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: QUT Verified Signature

Date: 3/3/2013

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to sincerely thank my supervisors, Courtney Pedersen and Kathleen Horton, for their advice, assistance and support throughout my candidature. I so appreciate the time, effort and expertise you have contributed to this project.

At QUT I was also fortunate to have the support of two important figures throughout my candidature; thank you Professor Suzi Vaughan and Dr. Susan Carson. Also thanks to my final seminar panel for their invaluable feedback: Dr. Mark Pennings, Dr. Tiziana Ferrero-Regis, and Associate Professor Evonne Miller.

This project has been a large undertaking and many people have been involved along the way. Thank you to the QUT Art Museum staff for allowing me to be an unofficial member of the team and curate three fashion exhibitions. Special thanks to Simone Jones, Megan Williams and Vanessa van Ooyen. My appreciation also goes to the staff at the State Library of Queensland.

A very big thank you to the Jean Brown Gallery and its staff, particularly Amber Long and Joshua Jones, who have given me wonderful opportunities.

To Charlotte Smith and the Darnell Collection – it was an honour to work with you and your extraordinary collection. I look forward to doing so again in the future.

Thank you Alison Kubler (a great friend and supporter) and Louise Martin-Chew, for partnering with me on some wonderful programs during my candidature.

To my very dear friends, Melissa, Paula, Maddy and Carla: I honestly could not have gotten through this without you. Thanks for all the love, hugs, debriefs and the many, many cups of tea.

Thank you to my parents, John and Pia, for always being so encouraging, understanding and supportive of everything I have ever done.

And finally, to my exceptional partner Huw. It has been quite a ride getting through two PhDs together. Your guidance has been invaluable and your work has inspired me. You have been my greatest collaborator and confidante, I cannot say thank you enough.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Topic and research contribution

This research project explores fashion curation from a theoretical, historical and practical perspective. It explores the role of the curator, and the impact of site on current understandings of fashion curation. As both a growing field of praxis and academic enquiry, fashion curation is an emergent discipline. In recent decades, the expansion of fashion studies in universities globally has been mirrored by the rise of fashion exhibitions in museums. The emergence of fashion as a subject of curatorial research is confirmed by the appearance of a number of dedicated postgraduate courses in fashion curation, alongside written texts and a new generation of fashion students pursuing the field in museums and universities. Within these contexts there are two dominant models of fashion curation: the institutional curator, and the independent curator.

In particular, the model of the institutional fashion curator has been dominant. To date, institutional fashion curators have been loosely defined as curators who hold permanent museum positions, and whose work advances the stated mission of the institution. Their work is predominantly characterised by its concern with the care, maintenance and presentation of the permanent museum collection. By contrast, independent fashion curators do not have fixed institutional positions, instead acting as freelancers. Independent fashion curating is a recent development in what has been a museum-led field. The growth of this role parallels that of tertiary fashion curation programs, which have produced a new generation of trained fashion curators without institutional positions to move into. Consequently, the independent fashion curator represents an increasingly dominant model of fashion curation.

With the ascent of the independent fashion curator, and the increasing scholarly attention on fashion curation more generally, it is timely to reassess the scope and limitations of these two models (the institutional and the independent). Through an exploration of the relationship between curatorial roles and specific sites this

research outlines the ideological positions of dominant fashion curatorial approaches. By applying a combination of theoretical, historical and practical perspectives, this practice-based research project has found the two major curatorial models to be insufficient for a nuanced analysis of the range and type of activities performed by contemporary fashion curators. Moreover, the study has identified a third, hybrid model of curation that has not yet been specified in the literature. To address a gap in the current understanding of fashion curation, this research project names, characterises and practically applies this new model: the 'adjunct fashion curator.'

This model borrows its title from Graham and Cook's *Rethinking Curating* (2010), which contextualises new media curating and describes the 'adjunct curator' as a curator who works freelance, but in conjunction with institutions (2010: 151). Hence the adjunct curator can be seen as straddling both an institutional and independent position. At the same time, adjunct curators are often brought in to collaborate with institutions as more experimental forces within museum programming - working with emerging artists, for instance - due to their disconnection and autonomy from the responsibilities of over-seeing a permanent collection.

The introduction of the adjunct fashion curator facilitates an expanded understanding beyond the current ideological split between independent and institutional models. Specifically, the adjunct fashion curator model is significant for the field of fashion curation due to its occupation of a dualistic inside/outside position. Inhabiting an intermediary position, the adjunct curator can negotiate their role in relation to different circumstances and locations. For example, they can collaborate with institutions to realise museum fashion exhibitions, while also introducing private collections, emerging designers and experimental approaches to display and exhibition conceptualisation into the museum environment. Thus an adjunct position may produce new strategies and broader implications for fashion curation by expanding the discourse beyond the two dominant models of institutional and independent fashion curating.

Furthermore, the term 'adjunct' has distinct implications for the field of fashion curating. Borrowed here from art curation, 'adjunct' suggests an auxiliary or subordinate connection to a pre-existing thing. In the case of fashion, this 'thing' is

the museum and by extension, art. The complex relationship between art and fashion, particularly over the last century, has often seen fashion placed in a subordinate position; it borrows themes and ideas from art, but is not itself classified as such. This perception needs careful negotiation and consideration, particularly in relation to fashion curation, which crosses and connects the territory between art and fashion. The wide-spread and rapid growth of museum (particularly art-museum) exhibitions of fashion complicates this relationship. Despite this growth, fashion continues to be painted as subordinate to art, particularly in the context of the museum. This subordinate position is also related to fashion's association with the body, gender and consumption. As such, using the term 'adjunct' can potentially give a label to the complicated terrain surrounding fashion's increasing prevalence in the museum environment and as such can provide the fashion curator with a mindful and knowing term to describe their negotiated position.

The study of fashion curation has largely centred on the museum as the primary location in which fashion curation has developed and continues to grow. The museum is indeed a primary site for fashion curation, and thus dictates the dominant models of fashion curation: institutional and independent. However, by exploring the sites of fashion curation beyond the museum, this research project suggests alternative models and methods for the fashion curator to draw upon[1]. For instance, the history of the department store is analysed as a key site for fashion display. I argue that this expanded view of fashion curation is ideally suited to the model of the adjunct fashion curator, who can be both an internal and external collaborator with the museum. Thus the adjunct fashion curator has the potential to introduce approaches and influences external to the institutional environment, while embodying the multi-faceted nature of contemporary fashion curation.

A key component of this research is my own practice and experience as an emerging adjunct fashion curator. Just as the voice of the fashion designer is under-represented in design discourse (Griffiths, 2000; Dunlop, 2011), so too is the voice of the curator. Most accounts of fashion curation take a theoretical or historical

[1] It is important to state early on that this project's conceptualisation of 'the museum' recognises that 'the museum' is not an undifferentiated type of institution, and that there are many types of museums. My research largely centres on the art museum.

perspective, leaving the perspective of the practitioner conspicuously absent. While the curator had previously been an invisible force within institutions, the 1960s saw the emergence of 'independent curators' whose agency as public figures positioned them as more akin to artists, occupying ideological territory. As a result, a focus on the role of the curator and the conceptualisation of the curator as an autonomous author or creator is a prominent feature of contemporary curatorial discourse. Within my work I articulate the curatorial process as a negotiation or conversation where collaboration and intersubjectivity (rather than authorial subjectivity) is vital. My exploration of an adjunct position seeks to address this position while also contributing to the development of fashion curatorial discourse more broadly.

My characterisation of the adjunct fashion curator is as one that straddles institutional and independent practices, and this is embodied in the creative project. Consequently, the exegesis will identify and analyse the processes and implications of the adjunct fashion curator model via reflections on my creative practice, in order to contextualise the contemporary and historical examples analysed in the contextual review. In order to ground this assertion, this research project traces a range of historical examples that have impacted the development of dominant fashion curatorial models. Accordingly, it takes a wider view, exploring specific sites that have been landmarks in the history of fashion curation, while at the same time re-visiting larger histories—such as the relationship between art and fashion, fashion and gender etc.—in order to highlight some of the complexities around the development of fashion as a curated medium. For instance, key figures in the history of fashion curation, Cecil Beaton and Diana Vreeland are re-envisaged through the lens of the adjunct fashion curator. This process offers new insights into their work and addresses the precarious position they have occupied, particularly in the case of Vreeland, due to the current focus on institutional and independent models exclusively.

Key terminology & project scope

In conceptualising the work of the fashion curator it is necessary to briefly outline and define some key terms, and there are some semantics to overcome. Up until the late twentieth century, curators who worked with clothing in museums were generally referred to as 'costume curators'. The shift to the term 'fashion curation', while not universal, can be linked to the academic and theoretical growth of fashion

studies that has sought to position fashion as a serious field of enquiry. The re-naming of departments within museums, and the growth of 'fashion curation' as a field within universities and museums have been significant factors in establishing this area of work and research. It is worth quoting at length fashion historian and curator Amy de la Haye's overview of current trends:

> Until recently, dress and fashion in many collections were generically described as *costume*, a term that could embrace fancy dress, theatrical attire, or occupational dress, as well as a simple cotton dress worn by a working woman in the nineteenth century, a current-day rhinestone-encrusted fashionable menswear jacket, or a hand-painted silk kimono. With reference to fashion (the creative expression of designers that can form a trend) and style (the individual "look" created by the wearer of fashionable clothes, to signal subcultural allegiances, for instance), in Britain the Museum of Costume in Bath has been renamed the Fashion Museum, and the collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) that was formerly described as *dress* (a term that can be used as a verb or as a noun referring to the media, identifying a specific garment style, or, more broadly, defining clothes that are not overtly influenced by fashion) is, in the early twenty-first century, called *fashion*, more accurately reflective of its content. The general definition of *dress* as body supplements and body modifications also applies within museums; for example, the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, mounted the exhibit Body Art: Marks of Identity in 1999 (in Eicher and Ross, 2010).

Therefore, to summarise: 'dress' includes the body, 'costume' includes special attire; 'fashion' is concerned with a system of rapid stylistic change, and 'clothing' is a more basic descriptor concerned with the objects left behind by fashion. However, most clothing was likely once fashion, so the use of the word fashion—particularly in museums—is also used to provide a historical context for the objects it collects and displays.

Fashion in the exhibition context, as I will explain, consistently faces critical resistance. However, I would argue that this environment has specific connotations for playing-out and exploring medium-specific complexities. With the passing of time items that were once the height of fashion will likely have passed into unfashionability. Resurrecting and re-framing these items through the display narrative of an exhibition provides opportunities to explore a myriad of concepts. A single exhibition may focus on the work of a particular designer, era, location or thematic conceit. While seemingly straightforward, these formats may also allow more complex excavations into cultural and social histories. Furthermore, the very act of resurrecting once fashionable garments can again introduce them back into the fashion system.

My curatorial work focuses primarily on fashion as a gendered medium capable of telling personal stories. In this context, the fashion system itself is rarely a major emphasis. However, even displaying objects through the lens of social history does not ignore the aesthetic qualities of the objects on display. So while a specific historical context (the woman of the mid-twentieth century, for example) may be highlighted in a particular exhibition, a viewer will inevitably commune with the garment through the memory of it once being the height of fashion; if not in their own life-time, perhaps during that of their mother or grandmother's. As such, a cycle occurs from fashion (in its original time) to clothing (an object in a museum collection) to fashion again (at the centre of an exhibition) that is distinct within the fashion exhibition.

Despite this potentially distinctive opportunity to interrogate the complexities of fashion, it has to be said that the burgeoning prominence of fashion within the museum generates discourses that tend to offer simplistically negative critiques. In studying the body of literature addressing fashion's place in the museum it is noteworthy that theorists from both sides of the argument seem to see fashion's inclusion as highly problematic. Even those in support of fashion exhibitions (often the curators themselves) feel compelled to dwell on the disadvantages of positioning fashion within the museum. Commonly explored are issues of display that are said to render the clothes 'lifeless', replacing the human body with its simulant, the mannequin. Also problematic are display techniques that place fragile clothing behind glass, and with the use of low lighting can imbue an exhibition with a tomb-like quality. A lack of touch is central here. If we generally engage with fashion as a very tactile object that cannot be separated from our embodied experience of it (Entwistle & Wilson, 2001), then its re-location into the museum as a preserved and exhibited phenomenon goes some way to explaining the uneasiness around its inclusion in the museum.

Hence dominant debates suggest that the fashion exhibition renders a haptic object into a solely optic one. This sees fashion continually positioned as the museum's 'problem child.' However, it should be acknowledged that the current diversity of practices within contemporary art frequently sees highly tactile or haptic works exhibited in the 'hands-off' environment of the museum. The aim of this research is thus to acknowledge the problematic or precarious position of fashion, but rather than getting caught up in prevalent debates currently surrounding fashion

curation, it suggests taking a broader historical view that utilises the example of the adjunct curator as a conceptual tool to further explore this precarious position. As such, this research does not exclusively focus on the museum but rather on a range of environments that have a significant influence on the model of adjunct fashion curating.

The scope of this project is however restricted to a number of key sites and debates around fashion display and curatorial discourse. For instance, I have chosen to look at the department store and window display as major environments for fashion display that precede and inform contemporary fashion exhibitions. While important histories relating to the boutique and runway show are relevant to the topic they are not within the scope of this study. Rather, specific sites are emphasised. The study takes a close look at the role of the curator and I provide an overview of general curatorial discourse. I include major debates such as complicity versus critique and the development of independent curating, but cannot exhaustively chart this field. I also attempt to balance these historical and theoretical concerns with my own creative practice as an emerging fashion curator.

This project therefore links an innovative historical account of fashion curation that expands the definition, historical trajectory and models of fashion curation, with an exploration of the practical aspects of fashion curating from the perspective of an emerging practitioner. The over-arching aim of this research project is thus to contribute to fashion curatorial discourse by focusing on the adjunct fashion curator in order to expand the current territory around fashion curation and exhibition.

Interpretive Paradigm

My work as a researcher is informed by the tenets of feminist theory, which can be a vast and contradictory framework. Feminism is in itself a collection of at times disparate ideas and movements. Central to all branches of feminist thinking, however, is a dedication to the equal rights of women and a resistance of social, sexual, historical and economic oppression of women. As a researcher and curator concerned with fashion and clothing as conduits for telling stories, particularly about women, the relationship between fashion and feminism provides a strong theoretical context for my work. This relationship is highly complex, but despite its complexities the relationship between the two areas is often seen as unproblematically oppositional.

In her seminal work *Adorned in Dreams* (originally published 1985), cultural theorist Elizabeth Wilson succinctly underscores the way in which the complex relationship between fashion and feminism is often flattened into two limiting conceptualisations:

> The thesis is that fashion is oppressive, the antithesis that we find it pleasurable; again no synthesis is possible. In all these arguments the alternatives posed are between moralism and hedonism; either doing your own thing is okay, or else it convicts you of false consciousness (1987: 232).

The tension between fashion and feminism was especially pronounced, according to fashion theorists Evans and Thornton, "in the early years of the Women's Liberation Movement, [when] the entire package of fashion was condemned by feminists" (1989: 1). Evans and Thornton also highlight fashion's implicit connection to the body and consumption in which a perceived complicity in women's oppression and stereotyping is acknowledged: "the feminist rejection of fashion was articulated as a repudiation of sexual stereotypes" (ibid: 6). However, the relationship between feminists and fashion, while arguably clear-cut in the beginnings of the Women's Liberation Movement, has been highly complex throughout the development of feminism[2]. Central here is fashion's perceived relationship to the 'feminine' and the 'natural.'

In *The Sceptical Feminist*, Janet Radcliffe Richards suggests that underlying a feminist contempt for fashion and cosmetics is a 'muddle' about "the natural person being the real thing" (in Wilson, 1987: 234). Evans and Thornton address a similar concern:

> The feminine, whether artificial or 'natural' is constructed through a system of adornment... Fashion, by mediating the actual physicality of the female body, can order it and keep it at a distance. If it is fashion that sets out the terms of this control, then fashion may also be used to subvert it. This is not done by attempting to resolve the impossibly contradictory position of women within the nature/culture split; but it may be possible to move into and inhabit that contradiction knowingly – to manipulate it, rather than be manipulated by it... If fashion is one of the many costumes of the masquerade of femininity, then those costumes can be worn on the street as semiotic battledress (1989: 14).

Thus Evans and Thornton suggest that fashion has the potential to be used as a tool for exploiting a knowing and aware position which can be negotiated and

[2] Chronology here is complicated. But to be clear, Feminism pre-dates the Women's Liberation Movement, which is generally understood as originating in the late 1960s. First-wave feminism is generally understood as originating in the nineteenth century.

"knowingly inhabited." The complexities that these theorists highlight serve to illustrate the difficult and contradictory co-existence of fashion and feminism.

While I identify with the principles of feminism, and seek to reconcile a feminist position with my fashion curatorial practice, it is important to clarify that my research and practice is informed by aspects of feminist theory and aesthetics rather than providing an example of feminist practice. As such, I am relying heavily on the recent work of Amelia Jones, whose concept of 'parafeminism' is of particular significance to my project. Jones argues for a diversity of approaches informed by feminism in her articulation of parafeminism in relation to the visual arts and curatorial practice.

In her article 'The Return of Feminism(s) and the Visual Arts, 1970/2009' Jones argues:

> If post-feminism implies an end to feminism, then through parafeminism–with the pre fix para- meaning both "side by side" and "beyond"–and its corollary politics of positionality I am conceptualizing a model of critique and exploration that is simultaneously parallel to and building on (in the sense of rethinking and pushing the boundaries of, but not superceding) earlier feminisms (2010: 44).

Rejecting the idea of 'post-feminism,' Jones has developed 'parafeminism' as a potential way of summarising contemporary feminist debates, without dismissing or attempting to supercede previous feminisms. Central to Jones' concept of parafeminism is to positively encourage a feminism that embraces a diversity of practices and approaches that have been informed by, but may also move beyond, earlier feminisms. Jones' argument rejects the possibility of a fixed positionality, stating, "positionality, then, is definitively *not* meant to imply a fixed locus in space, a determinable "identity," a knowable "body," or even an identifiable site in relation to ideology" (2010: 44). While Jones' enunciation of parafeminism is located in the visual arts, I employ her articulation of parafeminism in relation to my fashion curatorial practice and research. Central to Jones' concept is an inherent awareness and negotiation within a constantly shifting position, and this is a significant element within my own curatorial practice.

As stated, curatorial discourse often raises the concept of the curator as author or director, which suggests a fixed identity and position from which the curator operates. However, the introduction of an adjunct position suggests the potential to add to or supplant this concept of a fixed position. Hence, in my curatorial practice

I identify more with the act of curating as a negotiation of particular positions. Identifying the role of the adjunct fashion curator – and tracing it through various histories and practices in this research project - thus allows me to articulate my own negotiated (across institutions, practices and histories) curatorial position, while also addressing the relationship between gender, fashion and curating.

Within this always negotiated curatorial position, my conceptual understanding of fashion promotes its potential as a diverse record of women's lives across class, race, and time, and as a distinctive and contradictory medium that is both intimate/haptic (as a worn object) and spectacular/optic (as a displayed and exhibited object). With this emphasis on women's histories, alongside fashion and feminism, acknowledging the term 'herstory' is imperative. *Herstory* is a term used by feminists to describe the telling of histories that focus on the lives and roles of women, while also emphasising the lack of women's stories in standard history (Miller and Swift, 1976). The term originated in the 1970s and has since fallen from use, but is an important precedent for my own work dealing with women's histories, and stories. While *herstory* is concerned with incorporating feminist histories of women into historical discourse, it is also concerned with imagining the lives of women throughout history. The concept of imagining is explored in my own curatorial practice in which the factual histories of women pertaining to the provenance of objects are often lost. Reintroducing potential *herstories* into the museum environment and connecting these to fashion is a significant element of my curatorial practice that is facilitated by my adjunct position.

Methodology

My research is located within the field of fashion studies, which by nature is highly interdisciplinary and often draws on fields such as cultural studies and art history (Breward, 1998; Conway, 1987). In alignment with this interdisciplinary field of enquiry, I have approached this project utilising a hybridised methodological approach. This hybridised approach has resulted in a structure that has been designed to best serve the complex narrative of my research. As such, Chapters Two and Three make up the breadth of a conventional literature review *and* a contextual review, thus covering both literature and practice examples. In addition, a number of research methods have been used, including field research and data gathering, alongside object-based approaches. A practice-based methodology has

been combined with an emphasis on scholarly research and writing to address the complexities of the questions that I am addressing. Firstly, I will expand on the concept of practice-based research.

In order to define practice-based research I draw on Smith and Dean's description:

> The term practice-led research and its affiliates (practice-based research, practice as research) are employed to make two arguments about practice which are often overlapping and interlinked: firstly… that creative work in itself is a form of research and generates detectable research outputs; secondly, to suggest that creative practice – the training and specialised knowledge that creative practitioners have and the processes they engage in when they are making art – can lead to specialised research insights which can then be generalised and written up as research. The first argument emphasises creative practice in itself, while the second highlights the insights, conceptualisation and theorisation which can arise when artists reflect on and document their own creative practice (2009: 5).

The directions Smith and Dean raise are reflected in my research. Firstly, my creative practice as a fashion curator has formed a significant element of my research and has 'generated detectable research outputs' (a large body of creative projects). Secondly, this creative practice has led to 'specialised research insights,' namely the identification of a new fashion curatorial model developed out of the awareness gained from my creative practice. Similarly, Geof Hill describes practice-based research as based on an epistemological belief that knowledge arises from practice or experience (2006: 80). The knowledge that has emerged out of my practice and experience as a curator has directly resulted in the articulation of a new curatorial model for fashion.

While broadly informed by the framework of practice-based research, I have specifically utilised a hybrid methodological approach. The use of hybrid methodologies within practical research is emphasised by Hilary Collins in *Creative Research* (2010) as a way to approach the complexities often situated within various elements of practice-based research. I have employed a multi-method approach in my project in which key research methods are utilised and connected: curatorial practice, scholarly research and writing.

Curatorial Practice

Sullivan (2005: 138) names 'curatorial practice' as a distinct form of practice research. Sullivan's articulation of curatorial practice is anchored in the visual arts,

but equally applies to fashion, and although it is briefly mentioned in a much larger text it provides a framework for my project:

> Curatorial practice involves research about the visual arts. As a process that searches out new insights, there is an obvious artistry to the curator's quest. This is shaped by an equally rigorous attention to scholarship. Curatorial practice also has an educational intent that seeks to challenge and inform an audience... There is an imaginative tenacity that moves beliefs beyond blind faith and into thoughtful actions. There is an acceptance that knowledge is partly drawn from authority yet always moves by intuitive possibility with the direct experience of art. A curator's effort is given form in exhibitions that invariably include a collaboration with artists and others (2005: 138).

In this description Sullivan identifies the distinct elements that define curatorial practice. These elements are: research and scholarship, attention to an audience, education, tenacity, intuition, effort, and collaboration. At the same time, research and practice are linked in curatorial practice. Periods of practice, thesis writing and research have not been clearly divided throughout the project. Chapter Three of this document describes and reflects on the body of creative work undertaken throughout the candidature. This work includes five fashion exhibitions and one series of photographic images:

- *Modern Times, Modern Handbags*, State Library of Queensland (using the Jean Brown Archive)
- *Wearer/maker/wearer: recent work by Paula Dunlop*, QUT Art Museum
- *Imeldific! 20th Century Shoe Design*, Jean Brown Gallery
- *Material Memories: restaging the eCHO project*, QUT Art Museum
- *The Curated Spectacle* (photographic series)
- *Dreaming of Chanel*, QUT Art Museum

While Sullivan's description of curatorial practice is located in the visual arts, I am extending it to frame my practice as an adjunct fashion curator. At the same time, the language used by Sullivan to describe curatorial practice as research emphasises the 'artistry' of curating. However, in my curatorial practice I stress the importance of a knowingly negotiated position that involves others in a constantly shifting dialogue and collaboration. In this environment, curating is less about 'artistic vision' and much more about a pragmatic approach to a diverse range of influences, embodied through the inside/outside position of the adjunct fashion curator. Hence while Sullivan's identification of the curatorial process as a form of practical research is appropriate to my methodology, I acknowledge that my approach is

distinctive. The specific histories and processes of the adjunct curatorial approach will be elaborated upon in Chapter Two and Three in regards to other historical and contemporary practitioners' work; and in Chapter Four with respect to my own practice.

Scholarly Research & Writing

In concert with the body of practice that represents the practical outcome of the project, historical and theoretical research has been undertaken and realised in the contextual review. This scholarly research and writing seeks to address some overlooked histories surrounding the development of fashion curation and its current position as a rapidly growing field. At the heart of this approach is a desire to contextualise fashion curation through the lens of an adjunct position. In this review examples of practice and literature are explored simultaneously and reflect the methodological approach of the project, which combines practice-led approaches with more traditional qualitative research methods.

Fashion studies is arguably inherently suited to this kind of hybrid research. Breward (1998) and Conway (1987) identify the study of fashion as a multi-faceted field in which the approaches of several academic disciplines are often combined, such as cultural studies, art history and design history. In fashion research, this can produce work that is highly interdisciplinary in its approach. A large number of texts produced in the decades since the launch of the highly influential journal *Fashion Theory* in 1997 (and earlier, such as Elizabeth Wilson's ground-breaking work *Adorned in Dreams*, 1985) have made the case for complex readings of fashion as a cultural phenomenon that can be dissected through multiple lenses, including art history, psychoanalysis, feminism, sociology, philosophy, etc. (Troy, 2003; Evans, 2003; Hanson, 1990; Breward, 2003) More recently a gap within the field has been acknowledged with the launch of sister journal *Fashion Practice* in 2009. As previously stated, erudite analyses and reflections from the perspective of the fashion practitioner have been missing within the growing field of fashion studies. By combining critical and practical reflections of my fashion curatorial work with theoretical and historical analysis this project aims to introduce a new fashion curatorial model to the field. I argue that the adjunct curatorial model offers specific connotations for fashion and is a powerful tool for negotiation and subversion available to the fashion curator.

Aims & Objectives

This research contributes to the burgeoning field of fashion curation through the development of a new curatorial model. It provides historical and theoretical explorations coupled with a practical account from an emerging fashion curator, and emphasises the significance of site and the role of the curator. In undertaking this research, a number of questions are raised and addressed. These include:

- How do site, aesthetics and fashion intersect?
- What is the relationship between sites of fashion display – specifically department stores and window displays – and the history, theories and practices of fashion curation?
- Considering the close and at times interdependent relationship between art and fashion, does art curatorial discourse provide any insight into fashion curation, both in a contemporary and historical sense?
- What role has gender played in the development of fashion curation, and how is gender explored in my own practice?
- How can an analysis of the approaches taken by early precedents of the contemporary fashion exhibition/curator impact current practices?
- How does the adjunct fashion curator model offer new perspectives on the history of fashion curation?
- How can the adjunct fashion curator model be used in individual practices to establish new working approaches for the fashion curator?
- What does the adjunct fashion curator model yield for my curatorial strategies as an emerging practitioner?

In attempting to answer these questions, multiple contributions to knowledge have been made, these include –

- New insights into the history of fashion curation, including the integration of specific sites around fashion display and exhibition projects currently outside of the scope of the discipline
- Linking art curatorial discourse with fashion curatorial discourse
- The development of a new fashion curatorial model – the adjunct - that is analysed through historical contexts and creative practice reflection

The project consists of a practice-based component (weighted at 50%) and a written exegesis (weighted at 50%).

Synopsis

Following this introduction, Chapter Two is dedicated to exploring the significance of site in relation to fashion curation. This chapter focuses on three major sites: the museum, the department store and the window display. It addresses these sites by providing an overview of their historical development and implications for the growth of fashion curation. Coupled with this analysis is a series of case studies that relate specifically to these sites. For instance, particular fashion exhibitions engage with individual sites by playing out display approaches borrowed or appropriated from those environments. The issue of site is of particular significance to fashion curation due to debates surrounding fashion in the museum. This chapter proposes an expansion beyond the museum by introducing other significant sites for fashion display.

Chapter Three examines the role of the curator in a contemporary and historical context. It charts some of the histories and developments in curatorial literature and practice. This includes an exploration of the rise of the independent curator, and an overview of dominant contemporary debates surrounding the conceptualisation of the curator and their role. Here I discuss the dominant ideological positions of the curator, while exploring the concept of the adjunct curatorial model in greater detail. I also explore the work of key fashion curators and their role in transforming the discipline.

Chapter Four provides a practical account of fashion curation from my perspective as an emerging adjunct fashion curator. This chapter addresses the dominant themes within my practice and the collaborative partnerships formed throughout the project. The working concept of an adjunct fashion curator is explored in relation to my practice, where I reflect upon my position working in conjunction with institutions and with private collections. Detailed descriptions and extensive images of each individual project aim to record the working conditions and influences on each exhibition in order to extrapolate on the adjunct curatorial role. I critically reflect on each creative project in order to articulate and problematise my adjunct position.

My concluding chapter brings together an expanded theoretical, historical and practical reading of fashion curation in order to clarify my original contribution to knowledge and consider the role of the adjunct fashion curator, while simultaneously re-tracing the dominant arguments in the preceding chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

Reading Site: fashion exhibition and display

This chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the impact of site, primarily in relation to fashion display histories. It surveys a range of sites in which fashion is displayed and exhibited. These sites relate to the histories of curating and exhibitions, while also extending the terrain usually covered when discussing fashion curation. The sites that are analysed include the department store, the window display, and the museum. The latter is a key focus of almost all the literature surrounding fashion curating and thus takes precedence in this chapter. However, it is my intention here to contextualise this discourse by incorporating the histories of other sites that are also significant, but frequently overlooked.

This chapter is clustered around the three major sites of the museum, the department store, and the window display. For each of these sites a range of contextual examples (such as exhibition case studies) are explored. Furthermore, this chapter introduces early precursors to the contemporary fashion exhibition. These exhibition case studies serve to illuminate the range of contemporary and historical practices in order to frame the discourse of fashion curation beyond the museum site. The exhibition environment is also discussed in relation to site and historical contexts more generally. In addition, this chapter introduces key issues of contention for fashion in its various sites: its relationship with art, gender and the body, and controversial display practices.

The Museum

Providing alternative readings of fashion curation beyond the museum is key to this research project. However, the museum currently remains the dominant site in fashion curation discourse[3]. This chapter argues that while the museum is indeed fundamental, it is not the sole site for fashion curation and display. As mentioned, this chapter will also explore other key sites, including the department store. But

[3] As stated in Chapter One, my use of the term 'museum' is generalised for this project. However, I acknowledge that there are a multitude of types of museums. This research largely centres on art museums.

due to the omnipresence of the museum within the literature, I will begin by analysing its historical context and significance in relation to fashion. The connection between fashion and the museum is complex and broad. Here I will be reviewing several of the key texts that examine this tricky relationship, while also unpacking several other crucial debates surrounding fashion in the museum. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the history of exhibitions generally, and a case study that explores a contemporary fashion exhibition that investigates and subverts its museum environment.

Fashion & Dress in the Museum

Costume and dress have an extensive history within the museum context, while contemporary fashion does not enter the museum until much later. Exhibitions and collections of historical, ecclesiastical, royal and ethnographic dress in particular have long histories in museums. Jean L. Druesedow traces the historical development of museum exhibitions of clothing, stating, "perhaps one of the earliest deliberately organised exhibitions of dress occurred at the opening of the Royal Armory as a museum in the former Three Crowns Palace in Stockholm, Sweden, in the early seventeenth century" (2010). What is important here is the term 'dress' rather than 'fashion'. While museums have been collecting examples of dress—historical items, regionally specific pieces of clothing, garments worn by significant cultural or historical figures—the collection and display of contemporary and designer 'fashion' came only in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Since that time (but increasingly in the past decade) fashion's collection and display in the museum environment has often been seen as problematic. This position pertains predominantly to fashion and the work of contemporary designers[4].

There are a number of texts discussing fashion curation and exhibition in the museum that are 'soon to be published.' The development of these texts can be seen as indicative of the fact that the field of fashion studies itself is still relatively new and small. For example, the journal *Fashion Theory* was established in 1997, with sister journal *Fashion Practice* beginning in 2008. Likewise, texts exploring fashion's relationship to the museum are still establishing it as a valid field of enquiry. This growing body of literature diligently outlines the histories and issues

[4] This 'problem' is generally related to Diana Vreeland, as discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

of the display of dress and fashion in a museum context, and such texts continue to be published. A key text that discusses fashion in the museum is Fiona Anderson's seminal article 'Museums as Fashion Media' (2000). Anderson's article remains relevant and also flags the need for an increase in research in this area. John Potvin's 'Fashion and the Art Museum: When Giorgio Armani went to the Guggenheim' (2012) – extends many of the arguments Anderson raised in 2000.

Anderson's article represents both a starting point and a turning point for analyses of fashion's place in the museum context. Anderson herself acknowledges this in the beginning of her essay, stating that it is her intention to begin a dialogue, rather than provide concrete solutions. She argues that developments in fashion theory (what she terms "the 'new' fashion history,") coupled with developments in "the 'new' museology" join forces in the increasingly popular display of fashion. She states

> Published research which comments on the overlap between these disciplinary shifts has been minimal, despite the vibrant activity around fashion in museums and galleries and a flood of academic publications involving both of the above-mentioned disciplines. In this chapter I wish to extend debate in that area, which I hope will encourage further publication (2000:371).

Anderson's essay connects developments in museum studies and fashion theory together in order to analyse and identify the issues surrounding the exhibition of fashion with three different British case studies: the V&A, the Judith Clark Costume Gallery, and an exhibition of Hussein Chalayan's work at the Atlantis Gallery in London during 1999. Anderson uses these studies to highlight the key issues surrounding the display of fashion in a museum or gallery setting, including the concept of "entertainment versus education". Fashion's inclusion is proposed as problematic by Anderson, because fashion is itself a form of entertainment and "the fastest growing source of new ideas in contemporary visual culture" (Anderson, 2000: 372).

One of the most consistent criticisms levelled at museum fashion exhibitions is their collusion with the commercial side of the industry, particularly when working with single, living designers. This could also be said to be a problem for curators working in art museums, who work closely with the individual artist and have to integrate their ideas, or work with the artist's dealer, who may have business

concerns. However, with fashion curators it appears to be a more potent issue[5]. Anderson states

> It is undeniable that the motivations of designers to co-operate with curators in having their work displayed in museums are largely about prestige, self-promotion and profit. This, allied with the fact that fashion designers are understandably fiercely protective of their all-important brand image, presents curators with persistent and sometimes delicate realities to negotiate. However, despite the complexities of this scenario, scholarly curatorial work must embrace an acknowledgement of the commercial character of the fashion industry (Anderson, 2000:375).

While Anderson rightly asserts that it is necessary for the fashion curator to negotiate both the artistic and commercial aspects of fashion, this is also the case for the curator in fields such as art. But Anderson treats these as problems exclusive to fashion practitioners, rather than as concerns artists share: "prestige, self-promotion and profit."

Fashion is singled out both by those in favour of its inclusion in, and those in favour of its exclusion, from the museum. Given the close relationship between the display practices of sites such as the museum, department store and window display that this chapter highlights, the emphasis on fashion alone as problematically commercial seems unjustifiable. This is not to say fashion is *not* commercial, but more that fashion is not *alone* in its commercial context. The museum has shared commercial practices with stores and shops for decades (explored in detail in this chapter), while at the same time art in the twentieth century has (while maintaining its 'higher' position) also engaged with commerciality. Like fashion, art has been concerned with celebrity, mass-market appeal and commerce.

Whilst theorists discussing art curation recognise a sometimes difficult balance, the criticisms towards fashion curation are evidence that a different set of rules still apply for fashion when it enters the museum site. Even though Anderson covertly raised this issue over a decade ago, it still persists today. What this introduces is a raft of questions that Anderson largely avoids in her article, these include: What are the differences between an art exhibition and a fashion exhibition? What are the specific differences in promoting an artist (rather than a fashion designer) through a large scale museum exhibition? Why, when both art exhibitions and fashion exhibitions receive large corporate sponsorship, does only fashion get portrayed as

[5] It is noteworthy that fashion designers are increasingly collaborating with institutions on their own retrospective exhibitions, with many designers seeing curation as an extension of their practice.

colluding with commercial interests? The notion that fashion somehow equals entertainment rather than education is an over simplification of complex ideological distinctions between art and fashion. In the aforementioned article, 'Fashion and the Art Museum: When Giorgio Armani went to the Guggenheim' (2012), John Potvin addresses these questions.

Art & Fashion

The art-versus-fashion debate is arguably one of the most persistent within the arts throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. This debate generally focuses on the question: 'is fashion art?' The question is often used provocatively. It is almost impossible to definitively answer and often seems beside the point. Potvin echoes this sentiment, saying, "I am not interested in, nor is there sufficient room to rehearse, the by now seemingly compulsory debate marking out the boundary, if any, between art and fashion" (2012: 49). Likewise, it is not the aim of this review to cover this debate in its entirety. However, the increasing prominence of fashion within the museum has added a new dimension to this debate as fashion is seen to enter into art's territory[6].

There is near-consensus with regards to haute couture as akin to art, since "haute couture fills the role of avant-garde in the fashion world" (Graw: 2010, 50). Potvin points out that there is a hierarchy within fashion exhibitions, often coming from fashion curators themselves, in which 'avant-garde' fashion is seen as more worthy of inclusion in the art museum (2012: 56). Haute couture garments often end up in (or go straight from the runway into) museum collections and exhibitions and are often compared to art in this environment. A commonly asserted difference between art and fashion surrounds fashion's function and wearability versus art's lack of function. However, fashion's functionability is removed upon entering the museum, where it is never worn again (except by a sculptural, abstract form or mannequin). At the same time, as Robert Radford points out, throughout history "there has existed an almost unquestioned belief that an essential, almost a defining, feature of the nature of art is that it should demonstrate the quality of endurance" (1998: 151). As non-functioning, art thus lends itself specifically to endure, or not fall out of use. The concept of endurance is arguably in opposition to fashion, whose

[6] I covered some of these ideas in an article written for *Art Monthly Australia*, titled 'Up Close and Personal: Art and Fashion in the Museum' (Issue 242, 2011).

concern has been for 'the new' and for constant change. But fashion's inclusion in the museum signals its status as an object *worth preserving*. The museum thus imposes the quality of endurance upon fashion, and arguably alters this argument's tenability.

Like functionality, the concept of commerciality has been central to debates concerning art and fashion. Art generally resists claims to being commerce-driven, despite obvious examples to the contrary, including corporate sponsorship and increasing collaboration with global brands and fashion houses. Many of the examples that Potvin recounts in his discussion of the Armani exhibition are concerned with the financial entanglement between that fashion house and the Guggenheim. But as this review aims to demonstrate, there is a long history of slippery spatial ground between the store and museum.

Through careful research and with a strong desire to address these complexities, Nancy J. Troy problematises the dichotomous relationship between art and fashion in the context of modernism in her book *Couture Culture* (2003). Troy argues that the issues surrounding the 'commercial' (that are usually related to fashion and not art) are simply overt in fashion and covert in fine art, and certainly not new in either. In her conclusion, Troy states

> The example of cubism demonstrates that, like fashion, fine art in the modern period requires an audience, a discourse, a profile in the public sphere. The purity and disinterestedness often claimed for modernist art is, in this sense, a fiction that masks art's dependence upon socially constituted—even if buried or invisible—discourses of authorship, display and reception, the existence of which is necessary in order for art to be seen and understood as art (2003:335).

The terms that Troy raises – 'authorship, display and reception' – are key to understanding the ground that art and fashion do frequently share, especially in the museum. Like the argument surrounding functionality, Troy's point highlights the reality of an 'even playing field' when it comes to art and fashion. Both fields and practices share a need and a desire for an audience and sites for display. Both also privilege notions of individual authorship.

Anderson identifies another main focus of fashion in the museum and its perceived difference from art, and draws attention to the fact that fashion has traditionally occupied a "precarious position"

> between its status on the one hand as a creative product of labour and the illustration of the good taste of its wearer, and on the other that invoked by its intrinsic relationship to the body, which solidly damned it as linked to the base, the sexual and most definitely the 'lower pleasures' (2000:373).

Potvin also takes up this point, saying, "fashion is problematic within the arena of the art museum because it tacitly acknowledges the role the body plays… and thus by extension the lower senses of touch as well as the baser, even carnal pleasures" (2012: 60). This emphasises an area of contention for fashion versus art: the body. While the body is a feature of artistic practice (for example in Performance Art), the close and intimate relationship between fashion and the body is seen as distinct. In terms of philosophy, the body has been traditionally associated with femininity and beauty, which have been viewed with scepticism by those concerned with 'serious thought.' Karen Hanson tackles these problems in her article 'Dressing Down Dressing Up—The Philosophic Fear of Fashion' (1990). Hanson states that fashion "calls attention to illusions grounded on embodiment. The last thing it would let the soul forget is its connection to the body, and it is certainly conceivable that these reminders are a source of historic resentment" (1990: 113).

Hanson, Troy, Anderson and Potvin all highlight some of the complexities faced by curators and institutions in attempting to display fashion in the museum, where strong associations to the 'traditional' are often still present, and a resentment towards change (fashion) is clear. Fashion's connection to the body, and its perceived 'frivolity' mean that it is still "viewed with suspicion" (Anderson, 2000: 374) in a range of institutions, not just the museum. This leads to a potential double challenge for the fashion curator, who is fighting against prejudice, while at the same time seemingly lacking a long history of practice to draw upon for inspiration and guidelines. However, I argue this would be countered by exploring the fashion display histories of other sites as places for curation. In a very real sense the story of fashion curation is still being written, and the tense relationship between art and fashion is often at the fore of discussions. Also raised here is gender; with art perceived as masculine and concerned with the mind and fashion perceived as feminine and concerned with the body (Hanson, 1990).

Fashion & gender

Feminist theorists have often tackled the gender biases inherent in art and its institutions. As Katy Deepwell has stated, "the question of who controls our institutions and who decides what is shown has feminist implications with regard to the gender (im)balance in museums as institutions" (2006: 66). Fashion offers another avenue through which questions of gender can be explored, particularly in relation to collections of fashion in museums. Potvin argues there are "cultural assumptions that collecting is a male purview while consumption remains in the domain of the feminine" (2012: 60). However, these 'cultural assumptions' are not borne out by evidence. This point will be raised in the next chapter in relation to the important collecting practices of women curators such as Hilla Rebay and Iris Barry. These women are often overlooked however, signalling the existence of the gender biases within large cultural institutions and even curatorial discourse.

Fashion as a collected medium has been a gendered practice. Lou Taylor's *Establishing Dress History* (2004) seeks to trace the history of collecting and exhibiting costume within museums predominantly in Britain, and to a lesser extent, the United States, France and Central and Eastern Europe, beginning in the 16th century. Much of Taylor's text is dedicated to tracing the history of costume and textiles within museum collections. Taylor outlines key figures who were instrumental in the collection of clothing and thus significant in the prevalence of fashion and costume departments within museums today. The history that Taylor's work reveals is heavily gendered, and perhaps the most significant contribution that *Establishing Fashion History* makes is this revelation. In her conclusion, Taylor states

> In the world of decorative arts museums, however, even where departments of textiles and dress existed, they carried the lowest museological status within the hierarchy of museums, as 'the frock departments'. As the history of Western dress collection at the V&A proves, this was the result of a gendered prejudice within male-dominated decorative arts museums against what was seen as the worthless frivolity of feminine fashions (2004:312).

Taylor's study thus reveals a compelling 'reason' for the exclusion of fashion exhibitions and departments until well into the 20th century. It was not until the appointment of women to manage museum collections of dress that the

institutional perception of fashion began to slowly change. Taylor (2004: 314) says, "the first 'professionals' in the field… were all women. It was thus they who created the professional role of 'costume curator.'" So, aside from the issues facing fashion in the museum raised by Anderson - entertainment versus education, fashion's low academic status, commerciality (and art versus fashion) - Taylor adds another: gender.

Other writers in the field also acknowledge the impact of gender on fashion's place in the museum. Alexandra Palmer states:

> The fact that the craft of installing costumes and textiles has been largely performed by female curators and arty window-dressers has, I believe, been an important factor in the low status of these collections within museums. The time required to achieve these displays has also provided a distraction from more scholarly curating. Costume and textiles staff within museums have often been marginalised and perceived as a group of style-obsessed ladies and gay men playing dress-ups with large dolls (2008: 47-48).

Both Taylor and Palmer make a compelling argument that can go some way to explaining fashion's low status in a whole range of institutional sites, from universities to museums. At the same time, fashion is accepted in other 'less intellectual' sites, such as department stores, which have been associated with women since their inception (Whitaker, 2011). If the gender associated with fashion is feminine, and the gender of those who have curated and collected fashion has often been women (and as Palmer points out, gay men) then another element to this gendering of fashion can be seen in its most common device of presentation in a whole range of sites, including the museum: the mannequin.

The Mannequin

In discussions surrounding fashion in the museum, the mannequin often takes centre stage. The mannequin's necessary inclusion as a display apparatus to show-case (predominantly women's) clothing as it would ordinarily be 'worn' has often been portrayed as difficult for curators, and jarring for exhibition audiences. Seeing clothing on a mannequin without the ability to touch or 'try it on' can be challenging for exhibition visitors and curators alike (this point is explored in relation to my curatorial practice in Chapter Four). Further complicating matters, retail mannequins are the most readily available choice for the curator. However, they may not always be the most suitable choice for particular garments due to

changes to body shape and sizing. Furthermore, there are also distinct trends in mannequin design (in line with other areas of fashion). While there are trends in fashion and mannequin design, there are also trends in museum practices and fashion curation. In the last decade or so there has been a move towards abstract and often headless mannequins, and currently there is a trend for 'invisible forms' that are made from clear Perspex and fit the internal shape of a garment but have no external visibility. These forms erase the need to participate in other trends, such as time specific hair styles.

A glance at the history of the mannequin and the range of sites it inhabits may thus illuminate the problem of the mannequin in the museum. With the growth in spaces in which fashion on display was an important exercise – arcades, expositions, boutiques, department stores – the mannequin became both a necessary device and an exercise in artifice. Precedents for the mannequin can be identified in a number of sources, including dress-maker's forms, fashion dolls and wax museum sculptures (Parrot, 1982; Schneider, 1997; Sandberg, 2003; Mayhew, 2006). Schneider identifies the 1894 Paris Exposition as the site in which "200-pound wax figures" were introduced (1997: 6). Wax mannequins proliferated small and large stores, window displays and expositions into the 1920s. At the 1925 Paris Decorative Arts Exhibition highly stylised plaster mannequins with abstract, almost featureless faces made their highly realistic predecessors seem antiquated (Gronberg, 1997: 375). Along with their modern style, these mannequins also solved the problem of weight and the wax mannequin's tendency to melt in certain environments, such as a sunny window display (Schneider, 1997: 7).

In contemporary fashion exhibitions the mannequin has often been characterised as problematic by curators and viewers. For fashion curators, striving to capture the 'new' inherent in fashion, the mannequin can be a substantial problem. Elizabeth Wilson's essay, "Fashion and the postmodern body" (1992) raised this issue. Wilson's comments are frequently cited in discussions of fashion and the museum:

> Strangest of all were the dead, white, sightless mannequins staring fixedly ahead… The clothes themselves were brilliantly coloured, clear, incisive of cut, fancifully futurist, yet simple. But without the living body, they could not be said to fully exist… Nothing could have more immediately demonstrated the importance of the body in fashion (Wilson, 1992:15).

Here we see a twofold dilemma for the fashion curator: not only do clothes seem lifeless without the living, moving body, but the substitute for the body in the museum setting is inevitably the mannequin, causing a double dose of deathliness.

A sense of death was described by Wilson in the introduction to her now seminal book, *Adorned in Dreams* (1985), whose opening paragraphs discuss clothing in the museum setting, she says

> There is something eerie about a museum of costume. A dusty silence holds still the old gowns in glass cabinets. In the aquatic half light (to preserve the fragile stuffs) the deserted gallery seems haunted. The living observer moves, with a sense of mounting panic, through a world of the dead (1992: 1).

While Wilson's description may now seem dated, (given the growth in popularity of fashion exhibitions and the increasing emphasis on dramatic display techniques) her emphasis on death is engaging. Wilson's point is often taken up by theorists such as Anderson and Steele who acknowledge that this is a recurrent issue when displaying fashion. If, as Wilson and others, such as Entwistle, Calefato, and Evans asserts[7], the appreciation of fashion is wholly reliant on the presence of a living body, how do fashion exhibitions overcome this obstacle?

Claire Wilcox, curator of post-1900 fashion at the V&A, seeks to address this problem with *Fashion in Motion*, which is "a monthly event that bridges the gap between live catwalk shows and static museum displays" (Wilcox in Anderson, 2000: 377). Emulating the performative, embodied nature of fashion, *Fashion in Motion* sees live models walking through the museum space dressed in contemporary collections of designers such as Kenzo, Yohji Yamamoto and Giles Deacon. Whilst Wilcox can be seen to be challenging one of the most persistent criticisms facing fashion in the museum by injecting a living, breathing body into an environment otherwise populated with 'corpse-like' mannequins, the *Fashion in Motion* series seems like an over-simplistic solution. The program still separates 'living fashion' from exhibited fashion, arguably saying that catwalk shows are where fashion is shown most effectively, but without translating this idea further into exhibition practice. Constantly drawing distinctions between fashion outside of the museum and fashion inside of the museum only serves to further reinforce the problems facing curators in the museum environment.

[7] See, P. Calefato, *The Clothed Body* (Berg, 2004); J.Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Polity Press, 2000); C.Evans, *Fashion at the edge: spectacle, modernity and deathliness* (Yale University Press, 2003).

"Look but Don't Touch"

One of the major constraints faced by fashion curators is the inability for viewers to touch what is on display. While this is the case with all objects displayed in the museum, it has often been raised as a particular problem with fashion exhibition audiences, who are used to the tactility of clothing in their everyday lives (Palmer, 2008: 59). Hence fashion in the exhibition environment becomes solely optic, removed from its haptic, tactile qualities. However, similar conditions may also be found within contemporary art display in the museum. If fashion in the museum is automatically rendered optic by the necessity of adhering to conventions of practice and conservation, the same can be said of art. While this may not have been so jarring when the majority of art on view was in customary formats and media—mostly painting—the diversity of contemporary art practices (which Drucker addressed in *Sweet Dreams*) reveals a turn towards "materially engaging, viscerally seductive" work (2005: 39). At the same time, the dominance of screen-based art, in particular video installation, can also be read through what Laura Marks (in regards to intercultural cinema) and Amelia Jones (discussing Pipilotti Rist's work) call "haptic visuality" (Marks, 1993 & Jones, 2010). Thus contemporary art is identified as no longer solely optic either, and increasingly evokes haptic experiences that are nevertheless—like fashion—off-limits in the museum. The point here is to stress that the perception of fashion as a unique case or the 'problem child' of the museum exhibition should no longer hold in the same way it once may have.

In his famous *Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin discusses the 'phantasmagoria' of sites such as the World's Fairs and arcades in the nineteenth century. In her analysis and synthesis of the disparate, incomplete elements of Benjamin's massive project, Susan Buck-Morss states, "at the fairs the crowds were conditioned to the principle of advertisements; "Look, but don't touch," and taught to derive pleasure from the spectacle alone" (1991: 85). This concept thus illuminates an historical precedent for the conditions of looking that are present in a range of sites, beyond and including the museum, in which art and fashion would have existed (off-limits) side by side. More of these sites (the department store and window display) will be explored later in this chapter. While these sites are the key infrastructure of display, it is necessary to also consider the history of exhibitions as particular environments for display. A general discussion of the development of the modern

exhibition will move in to a more nuanced analysis of contemporary fashion exhibitions and particular case studies that illustrates innovative interactions with site.

Exploring Exhibitions

Exhibitions are temporary events. While exhibition catalogues and reviews survive as documentation of the fact that an exhibition took place (where, when, whose work etc), these sources also serve very particular functions and cannot replace the contingent experience of the exhibition itself. Reviews often put forward the opinion of a critic, who may consider the total effect of an exhibition, but can also offer the biased reflections of an individual. Catalogues rarely illustrate the actual exhibition itself, choosing instead to act as an accompanying text with photographs of included works, or in the case of fashion, garments. Catalogues are generally forums in which curators and critics can publish their ideas and demonstrate prowess in relation to the subject matter rather than comprehensive documentation.

As such, it is rare for a catalogue to provide details regarding the exhibition's presentation and environment[8]. Catalogue photographs are most often conservatively presented and separate the works from the physical exhibition site. In the case of art this usually means images of individual works, while a fashion exhibition catalogue generally presents photographs of the garments on blank black or white mannequins with plain backdrops. Little information exists as to the physical space of the exhibit, such as how the garments were presented, design elements, etc. This is the case with most forms of curation. Consequently, the physical space of the exhibition, once it has ended, becomes lost[9]. It is only through physically experiencing the exhibition that the viewer gets a full picture, but even then, the process that the curator undertook to get to the final stage generally remains hidden. Furthermore, the works photographed and contained in the catalogue may or may not be a full list of those present in the exhibition. All of these elements serve to create exhibition environments in which the techniques of constructing exhibitions are unknown to the exhibition audience.

[8] Some notable exceptions exist. The catalogue for *AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion*, an exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2006, contained large-scale photographs of each exhibition room alongside detailed essays.

[9] For this reason I have included photographic records of exhibitions I have curated as part of this document, and it is part of my curatorial practice to continue to record these environments.

The discussion of exhibition approaches, histories and techniques within wider cultural histories has been raised by a small but increasing number of theorists, critics and historians. In such cases the exhibition site is explored as a key feature in curatorial, museological and cultural histories. A concerted body of literature began to emerge in the mid 1990s. This explored the physical environment of the museum and its changes in presentation over time, alongside a focus on the specific format of exhibitions. One key example of this is *Thinking about Exhibitions* (1996), an edited book of texts focussing on current exhibition practices and some historical precedents. This book can be understood as part of a move towards producing more literature around curating, but is also noteworthy because of its focus on exhibition format and ideology. Another early example is *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (1994). This questions exhibition and display techniques throughout various museum histories[10].

Prior to the emergence of texts like these, Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube: the Ideology of the Gallery Space* (originally published as a series of essays in *Artforum*, in 1976) was rare in its desire to address the gallery itself as a specific site that impacts the display of contemporary art. O'Doherty's 'white cube' describes an ideal aesthetic of the contemporary art gallery:

> The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all clues that interfere with the fact that it is "art." The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself… The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically, or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting the feet while the eyes have at the wall. The art is free, as the saying used to go, "to take on its own life" (O'Doherty, 1999: 14-15).

The 'white cube' has come to describe an ideal site for displaying modern and contemporary art. Discussing the Museum of Modern Art in New York (often seen as the quintessential 'white cube') Christoph Grunenberg says, "the so-called 'white cube' liberated modern art from its common association with decadence, insanity, sensuality and feminine frivolity" (1994: 205). The 'white cube' remains a dominant paradigm when discussing the display of contemporary art. Increasingly, however, theorists and historians have begun to explore exhibition approaches within histories of the art museum.

[10] Others include: *The Power of Display* by Mary Anne Staniszewski (1998); *Contemporary Cultures of Display* edited by Emma Barker (1999); *Art and Artifact: the Museum as Medium* by James Putnam (2001); *Strategies of Display* by Julia Noordegraaf (2004); *Art and the Power of Placement* by Victoria New House (2005); *Museum Skepticism* by David Carrier (2006); *Spaces of Experience* by Charlotte Klonk (2009).

Coinciding with this literature, and perhaps also spurring it on, was a larger shift in the 1990s towards texts considering 'Visual Culture' that can be traced to key works from the 1970s (such as Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975) and John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972)). Looking at exhibition and display techniques (the way that museums construct visual narratives for their viewers) is also aligned with Visual Culture's interest in images and their relationship to consumers. The growth in Museum Studies or Museology encouraged a focus on the exhibition which likewise began in the 1990s (Peter Vergo's *The New Museology* (1989) is foundational). However, texts dedicated to reading exhibition histories, environments and strategies did so through the lens of art history, with the art exhibition representing the major focus of this literature. In their introduction to *Thinking about Exhibitions*, editors Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne state

> Exhibitions have become *the* medium through which most art becomes known… Exhibitions are the primary site of exchange in the political economy of art, where signification is constructed, maintained and occasionally deconstructed. Part spectacle, part socio-historical event, part structuring device, exhibitions – especially exhibitions of contemporary art – establish and administer the cultural meanings of art (1996: 2).

Hence art is at the centre of readings of the exhibition site.

In order to explore the significance of exhibitions at a particular site, art historian Mary Anne Staniszewski studied the image archives of the Museum of Modern Art. This museum has meticulously recorded its exhibition environments from its inception in 1929. Staniszewski utilises these images to trace a history of MoMA's exhibition environments and arrangements over the twentieth century. She grounds her argument by identifying the gaps in current art histories:

> The way modern artworks are actually seen and displayed remains a relatively overlooked consideration. The ephemeral nature of exhibitions, while certainly contributing to this amnesia, cannot adequately explain why art history consists predominantly of histories of individual artworks in which [exhibition] installations are ignored. However much art historians may foreground the historical context of an image or object, the subject of analysis, in most instances, remains the discrete work of art; and there is an implicit acceptance of its autonomy (1999: xxi).

While statements such as these made by Greenberg, Ferguson, Nairne and Staniszewski are credible, concerns with art and the art institution can at times overshadow broader connections with other types of exhibitions and mediums.

Prolific art historian and curator Germano Celant, who is currently Senior Curator at the Guggenheim and Artistic Director of the Prada Foundation, has pursued a variety of methods and materials with his exhibitions. He argues:

> What seems troublesome and reactionary to me is the use of a method that compares *only art* to art. For this reason I have preferred and continue to prefer an expository method that affirms the convergence of languages, so that fashion intersects with art, theatre with economics, literature with politics, architecture with music (1996: 385).

Celant highlights the fact that art exhibitions are the valued model for all other forms of exhibitions. It becomes clear, however, that this is a contemporary tendency; even within art histories. In Staniszewski's study of MoMA a broad diversity of exhibition practices characterised that institution, particularly in the first half of the century, when design exhibitions were a frequent occurrence. As a result, Staniszewski highlights the shared histories (particularly prior to 1960) between galleries like MoMA and the commercial sphere (1999: 165). Others make similar connections with examples beyond the museum art exhibition. In *The Exhibitionary Complex*, Tony Bennett explores the impact of the Great Exhibition, held in London in 1851 and considered the first of its kind:

> The Great Exhibition of 1851 brought together an ensemble of disciplines and techniques of display that had been developed within the previous histories of museums, panoramas, Mechanics Institute exhibitions, art galleries, and arcades. In doing so, it translated these into exhibitionary forms which, in simultaneously ordering objects for public inspection and ordering the public that inspected, were to have a profound and lasting influence on the subsequent development of museums, art galleries, expositions, and department stores (1996: 83).

Simiarly, in *Spaces of Experience* art historian Charlotte Klonk links exhibition techniques with other display histories, including department stores, bazaars, interior and commercial design (2009).

In her study of European museum presentation, *Strategies of Display* (2004) Julie Noordegraaf links visual tropes such as display cases and vitrines (common in museum exhibition environments) to their commercial source in watchmaker's stores in the early nineteenth century (2004: 47). While the 'white cube' has come to be a shorthand for the museum or art gallery exhibition site, Noordegraaf links it to similar developments in what she terms "transparency in presentation", which also characterised the post World War Two department store (2004: 163). While the theorists discussed above focus on art exhibitions, their points regarding the interconnected relationship between the art exhibition and sites such as department

stores is highly relevant to fashion, and this point will be explored further in this chapter.

In contemporary fashion exhibition practice a range of sites are engaged. The museum remains the main site for fashion exhibitions, however, this site can be interacted with in a variety of ways. The key site of the museum may be subverted through curatorial intervention that challenges customary exhibition display practices for fashion. While strict museum conventions must generally be adhered to when working in a museum environment, curators may challenge these conventions through a variety of means. One way to do so is by occupying an adjunct or independent position, allowing the curator a level of freedom. Another is to work with private or deaccessioned collections (I explore both of these in regards to my practice in Chapter Four). The following case study provides an example of a distinctive curatorial approach in relation to the museum site[11].

The Concise Dictionary of Dress, Blythe House, The Victoria & Albert Museum (2010)

A project that united a fashion curator (Judith Clark[12]) and a psychoanalyst (Adam Phillips), *The Concise Dictionary of Dress* utilised site, language and clothing in innovative ways. Located in Blythe House, The Victoria & Albert Museum's working store for its reserve collections, *The Concise Dictionary of Dress* addressed the format of the fashion exhibition and its potential sites in a very deliberate way. Furthermore, its location inside a largely unseen environment within the V&A museum presents an unusual and uncommon relationship to site. *The Concise Dictionary of Dress* unsettles the conventions of display and exhibition environments usually dictated by the museum. By installing the exhibition within a working collection store, the exhibition allows access to a hidden element of the V&A site and museum storage environments generally.

The exhibition's premise was played out through a collaboration between (partners) Phillips and Clark, whereby terms describing ideas, emotions and

[11] Unless otherwise specified, this and all exhibitions discussed in this chapter have been engaged with through secondary materials including reviews, catalogues, images etc.

[12] Clark is arguably the most prominent independent fashion curator working today. She established a stand-alone fashion gallery (the Judith Clark Costume Gallery, London) that ran from 1997-2002. Her most famous exhibition, *Spectres: When Fashion Turns Back* was held at the V&A in 2005. While she is a significant figure within the contemporary field, I do not specifically discuss her body of work. The inclusion of *The Concise Dictionary of Dress* serves as an example of an innovative approach to fashion curation in relation to the museum site, while also acknowledging Clark's presence as a key figure within the field.

associations surrounding dress were selected by Phillips and then translated into exhibition installations by Clark. The terms were: armoured, comfortable, conformist, creased, essential, fashionable, loose, measured, plain, pretentious, tight. Each was defined and accompanied by an installation. For instance, the word "comfortable" was defined by Phillips as:

1. A refuge; a nostalgia; the calm before or after
2. The affluence of ease
3. Fear of the future, rehearsed
4. Pleasure as convenience; measured longing.
5. Space protected to forget that protection is required
6. Invisably armoured.

Alongside Phillips' definitions was an installation of Madame Poiret's white linen night gown, housed in a glass and timber cabinet (figure 1).

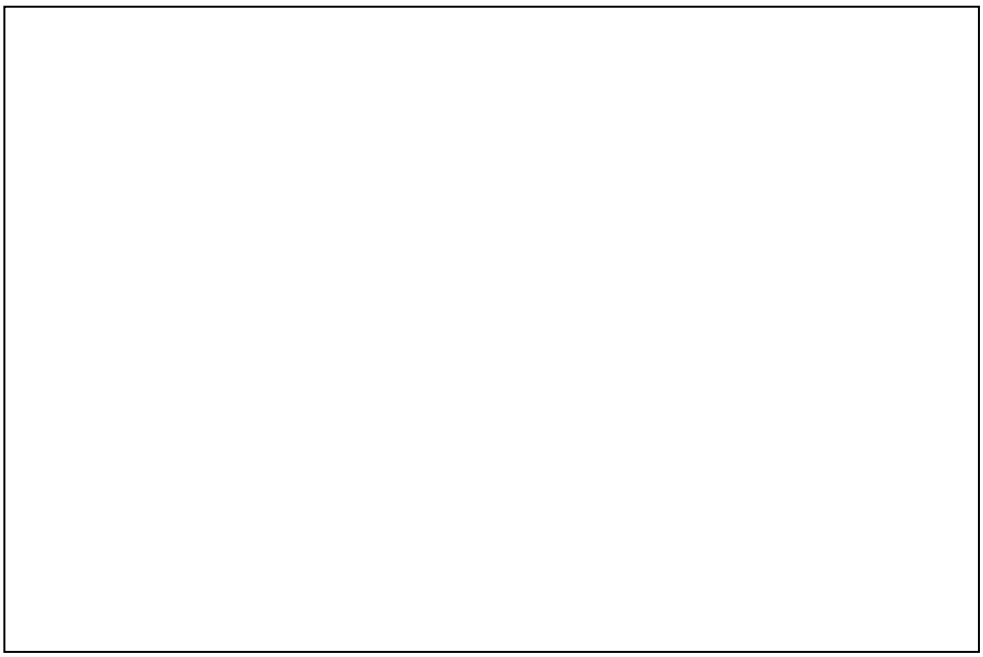

Figure 2. Installation view, "Comfortable", *The Concise Dictionary of Dress*, 2010.

While it is common for fashion theory to utilise psychoanalytic ideas and terms, the translation of this relationship into a museum exhibition is highly unusual. It is more often than not the case that fashion exhibitions follow one of a number of frequently used formats: single designer retrospective (Christian Dior), a particular era or movement (the 1920s), a showcase of a particular donor or collector (one women's wardrobe), or theme exhibitions such as 'colour in fashion'. *The Concise Dictionary of Dress* was distinctly different to these formats for several reasons.

Firstly, its location in Blythe House was unusual due to the fact that this location is used for collection storage. Museum collection spaces and storage facilities are almost always off-limits for the public. Special tours or groups may occasionally be allowed to go 'backstage', but access to behind-the-scenes environments of museums is usually restricted. Revealing this site with a public exhibition subverts this standard protocol.

Furthermore, spaces designated for exhibitions are often unchanging within museum architecture. While museum interiors can be altered and temporary shelves, walls etc. can be created, many museums have designated galleries to show specific items. The V&A has a permanent fashion gallery, for instance. Shifting the location of this fashion exhibition to a different site within the museum perhaps makes it more akin to a 'site-specific work' than a standard museum exhibition. Curator Judith Clark explains the deliberance and significance of its location, saying

> The archive is a very important ingredient here, as visitors do not expect garments to have been brought to life, but instead stored, classified and protected, and it is here that I am free to wonder: what are we storing when we are storing dress?" (2010: 110.)

In fact, while it might seem that Clark's intention was to display items from the archive that might not have otherwise been exhibited, this was not the focus of the show. Instead, the majority of the items contained in the exhibition were not from the V&A collection, emphasising the site itself over the objects displayed.

The Concise Dictionary of Dress resisted explaining itself and objects through conventional didactic labels, again subverting standard museum procedure. The process of viewing the exhibition and gaining access to its site, Blythe House, was also unsual. In her review of the exhibition, Julia Petrov describes the process of gaining entry to view the show:

> The gated entrance at the side of the sprawling Blythe House building asked visitors to buzz and identify themselves. Past the iron bars and barbed wire, and in an outbuilding housing the ticket office, visitor's mugshots were taken to produce badges worn as identification. Groups of seven, led by a key-holding guide, disappeared into the maw of the freight elevator every twenty minutes… The guide handed out cards to each of us, containing the title of the installation—"Armoured"—and the numbered, dictionary-style "definitions" written by Phillips. We were instructed to ponder these in relation to one another, and it was immediately obvious that the definitions did not correlate strictly to what was evident, in the synonomous style which one might expect (2012: 110).

Hence the viewer's expectations of what the experience of visiting an exhibition involves and how the museum environment functions is challenged.

At the same time, Clark's arrangement of installations and lack of clear labelling is consistent with her practice of exploring museum and exhibition processes *as* exhibitions or sites unto themselves. While Clark seeks to highlight the dominant practices and approaches of the museum, particularly in relation to fashion, Petrov argues that, "while it questions [the constructed nature of the museum], it relies heavily upon it for its success, and does not provide an alternative to the system it critiques" (2012: 114). It is thus hard to guage the 'success' of an exhibition like this, although that point is itself axiomatic: if fashion exhibitions are often touted as crowd-pleasing and popular, Clark's exhibition attempts to resist those claims, and does so predominantly through its use of a specific museum-based site.

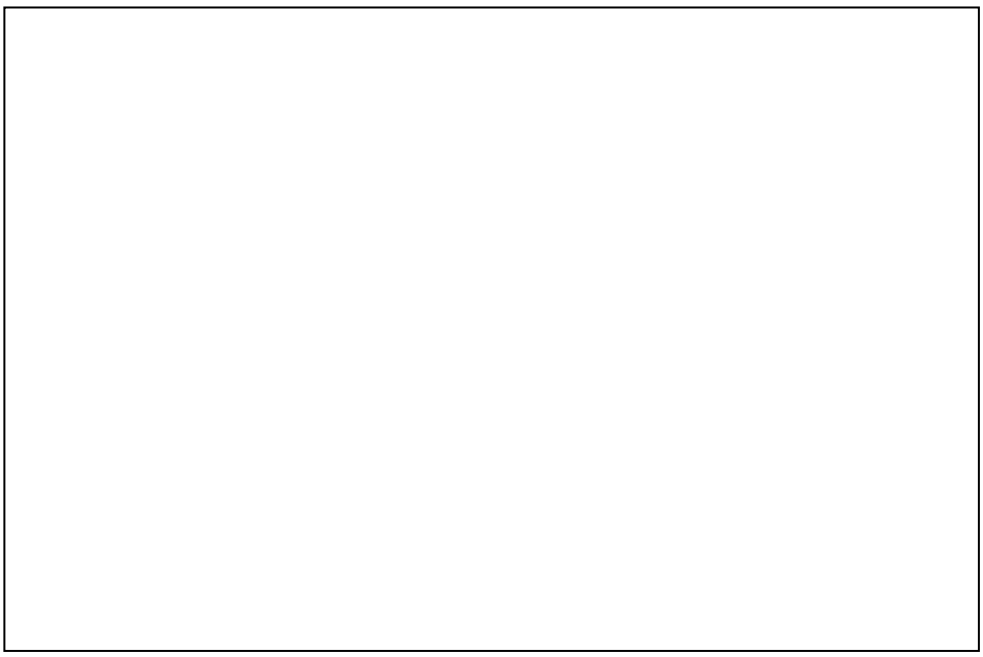

Figure 3. Installation view, "Essential," *The Concise Dictionary of Dress*, 2010.

The Concise Dictionary of Dress also emphasises a series of references. It references the museum site through its location in a large museum archive, yet it resists the museum site by not show-casing or clearly contextualising its objects. It utilises a reference book – the dictionary – but challenges the concept of language and meaning as fixed and unchanging, thus aligning it to fashion. Additionally, Clark also seems to reference the history of curating (especially fashion curation), but

quite covertly. An obvious example was her installation for the word "essential", which referenced Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas; a collection of 2000 images arranged on 79 black fabric covered panels which Warburg obsessively arranged (figure 2). Warburg's Atlas is in itself a kind of imaginary museum that is often discussed in museum and curatorial discourse (Dillon, 2004).

Clark thus reveals some of her sources, but only to those who are already aware of their origin. Thus the secrets of curating remain secrets, despite what might initially appear as a 'behind the scenes' view of curating. Another example is her installation titled "fashionable" that consisted of a cabinet full of cloth covered head forms wearing different versions of white wigs (figure 3). The cabinet was labelled "1971." To the untrained eye this reference would be meaningless; but as a fashion curator I know that Clark is referring to Cecil Beaton's 1971 V&A fashion exhibition which altered the history of fashion curation, and introduced contemporary fashion into the museum site.

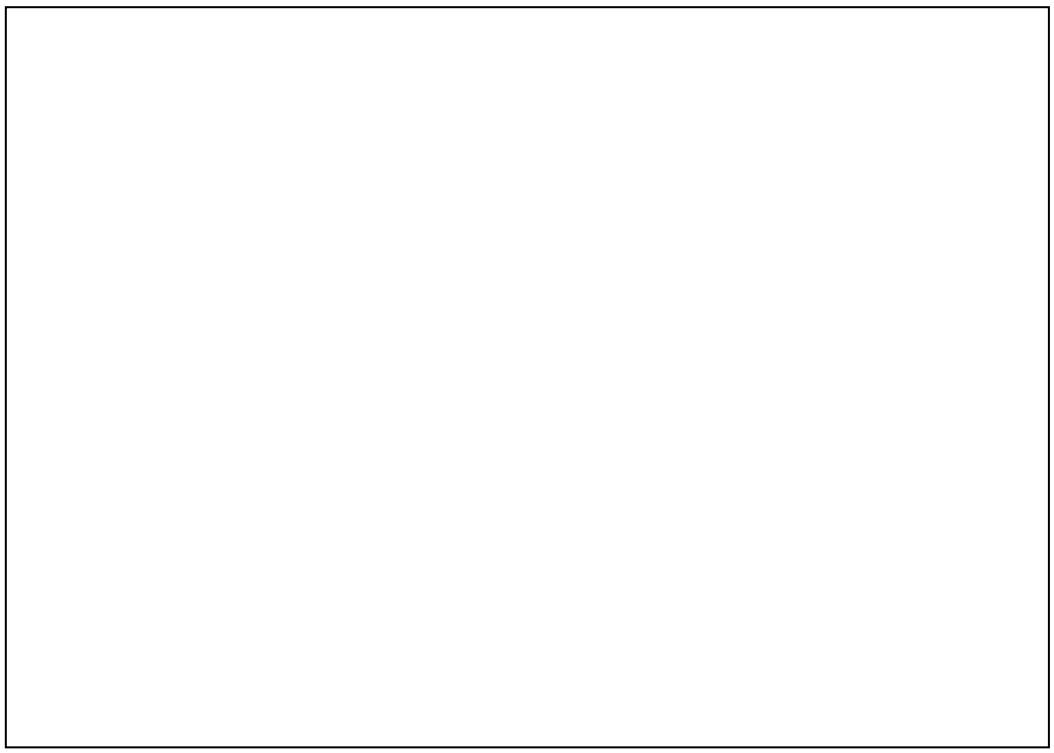

Figure 4 Installation view, "Fashionable," *The Concise Dictionary of Dress*, 2010. .

Similarly, Clark also references Diana Vreeland's work at the Costume Institute in her installation titled "Plain," in which mannequins are wrapped in paper, echoing the styling of the photographs taken in Vreeland's catalogue for her Yves Saint Laurent show (figure 4).

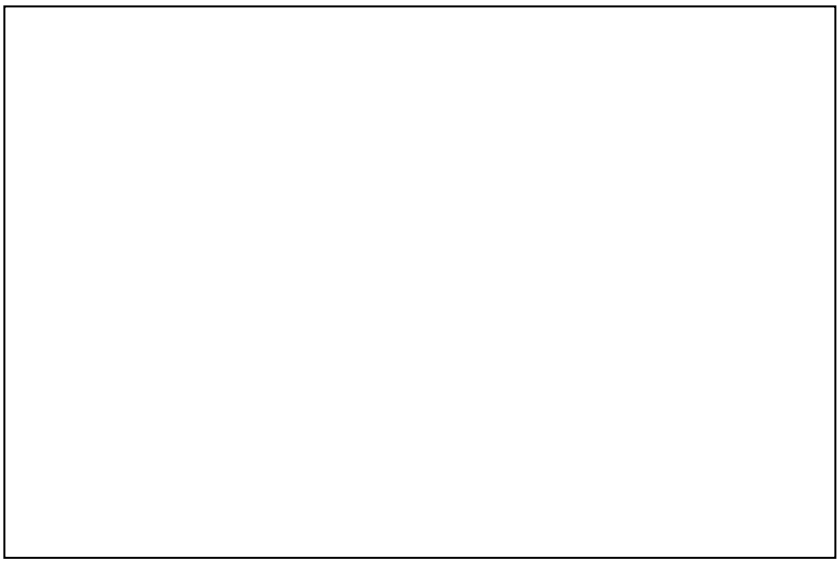

Figure 5. Installation view, "Plain," *The Concise Dictionary of Dress*, 2010.

Above all *The Concise Dictionary of Dress* experimented with location, installation formats, labelling and curatorial conventions as a way to probe the processes that are both obvious and hidden in museological practices and within the museum site. *The Concise Dictionary of Dress* sought to ask questions rather than provide definitive answers to the topics and conventions it raised. As with many of Clark's exhibitions and collaborations, the process of staging exhibitions and testing the approaches to those exhibitions seems far more important than the outcome itself. In this sense, the act of staging an exhibition in the alternate site of Blythe House is as significant, if not more so, than the exhibited objects themselves.

So far this chapter has outlined the museum as a major site for fashion display. It has traced the key debates and provided contextual sources to expand on the significance of the museum within the literature. This chapter has also implicated other sites, including the department store.

The Department Store

The department store is an institution that shares a parallel history to the museum, and therefore it is not surprising that texts addressing the art museum routinely mention the impact of department stores (as already seen in this chapter). In histories of the museum, discussions of exhibition practices, and also histories of department stores themselves, it is immediately clear that compelling intersections exist between the store and the museum. These institutions share a time-line in which their development and the rise of the modern city are related. Both

institutions also evolved out of earlier precedents, but do not replace the private collection and market.

In the case of museums, precedents exist in the *kunstkammer*, *wunderkammer* or cabinet of curiosities. These were eclectic and private collections often displayed in elaborate cabinets in the homes of wealthy, upper class men (who generally showcased their finds to other wealthy, upper class men (Putnam, 2001)). The precedent for department stores lay in smaller stores and arcades as well as bazaars (large marketplaces), that often made shopping arduous for customers. Shoppers were presented with either a small or overwhelming selection to choose from. In this scenario nothing was priced, and haggling was how items were sold (Whitaker, 2011: 63). The arcade in particular can also be likened to the cabinet of curiosities. Jane Kromm (2010: 198) describes "the delimited space of the arcade and its fairyland-like, world-in-miniature parameters, [which] eventually gave way to the preference for the open visibility of more spatially expansive venues" like department stores. Hence as the cabinet gave way to the museum, so too did the arcade give way to the department store. The museum and department store also influenced and were influenced by world's fairs and exhibitions, which occurred with greater frequency from 1851 through to the early 20th century.

As public museums and large department stores began to expand in the late eighteenth century (museums) and early to mid-nineteenth century (department stores) both sites placed emphasis on display techniques and organisation of space. In both institutions, visuality was key. Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska's *The Value of Things* (2000) reveals the significance of looking or 'browsing' in department stores. This emphasis away from a pressure to purchase an item links the store to the museum. Like museums, stores had once been limited to entry by particular classes in society, but the democratic accessibility of the department store led to a change:

> This subtle shift in practice (free entry, product returns) encouraged visitors to enter the store with no apparent obligation to buy, helping blur the distinction between two previously separate social performances: between the aesthetic appreciation of things – the museum visit; and the possibility of buying something – shopping. Put together, these performances fused into a new leisure activity: browsing (Cummings & Lewandowska, 2000:69).

Elizabeth Wilson makes a similar point in her book *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (1985), where she emphasises the significance of looking. She states,

"along with exhibitions and museums, the nineteenth century department store and its concept of shopping as a leisure activity, and as a pleasure rather than a necessity, testifies to the importance of *looking* in capitalist society" (1987: 152).

In many cases, what was being *looked at* in the department store was similar, or at times the same, to what was being looked at in the museum. Art galleries were common features in department stores, as were other cultural spaces such as theatres or music halls. Elyssa Dimant points out, "by the early twentieth century, art exhibitions, concerts, cafes, lectures, and other worldly indulgences had become well-established components of the department store" (2009: 239). What these sites allowed was a democratisation of art. Artist, architect, theatre and window designer Frederick Kiesler (who also worked with Hilla Rebay and Peggy Guggenheim on gallery designs) claimed that "contemporary art reached the masses through the store. The department store was the true introducer of modernism to the public at large" (1939: 66). Jan Whitaker concurs, "For many shoppers, a department store show was their first experience viewing original artworks" (2006:147). Citing the American department store Gimbels as her example, Whitaker recounts the story of ten Cubist paintings that were sent on a touring exhibition circuit in 1919 after being shown in the Milwaukee store (2006:147)[13].

It is safe to assume that for the majority of audiences in America at this time, seeing these artworks at their local department store would have been their first encounter with avant-garde art. This point is confirmed by the president of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert W. DeForest, who declared in the 1920s that "department stores were more influential than all the nation's museums combined" (in Whitaker, 2006: 147). The ability to educate, often understood as the museum's sole mission, can here be understood as shared by the department store, whose involvement in cultural programs was key to its identity as a modern institution. It is interesting to note that for the most part galleries have disappeared from department stores. Meanwhile, the store has entered the museum and it would now be unusual for a museum not to have a shop filled with books, jewellery and reproductions for sale.

[13] In an Australian context, department stores such as Georges and David Jones included art galleries.

Other examples can be found that serve to illustrate the close relationship between stores and museums. In her history of MoMA's exhibitions, Mary Anne Staniszewski discusses several design exhibitions that took place from the 1930s through to the 1950s that make the museum seem unabashedly like a store. The *Useful Objects* exhibitions are particularly compelling examples. These exhibitions ran annually from 1938 until 1950. The first, in 1938, was titled *Useful Household Objects under $5.* Here the exhibition space was populated with examples of what MoMA and its director Alfred H. Barr Jr. considered 'good design.' The exhibition contained "low-priced, machine-made, mass-produced household articles [which] were arranged in installations that evoked, in a simple and minimal style, both store and home" (Staniszewski, 1998: 160).

The show travelled, not only to an art association, but to colleges, two department stores and a shop that sold furniture, pottery, glass, textiles and metalware. Furthermore, "manufacturers and prices had been listed on the exhibition labels. As a result, significant numbers of visitors sought these objects from local distributors… some wholesalers actually opened new retail outlets as a direct result of this exhibition" (1998: 160). The following year, when the *Useful Objects* exhibition was held again, the objects were "$10 or under" and the exhibition coincided with Christmas "to influence and make the most of holiday shopping" (1998: 162).This timing and travel schedule continued with the subsequent shows. While each item in the exhibition contained what was effectively a price tag, Staniszewski states that "there was always a reminder to the reader that purchases could not be made at the Museum; but the exhibition was a shopping aid, with stores and prices cited in a checklist" (1998: 162). Arguably the function of instructing consumers on 'good design' has now shifted to the MoMA store, where a customer can in fact purchase those items. This cuts out the process of having to 'go to the manufacturer' and instead literally transforms an element of the museum into a shop.

MoMA was not alone in its approach. The Newark Museum emphasised design in its programming and brought a Werkbund exhibition to the museum in 1922. In 1928 and 1929 the Newark Museum held exhibitions titled *Inexpensive Articles of Good Design* that were also shown at Christmas (1998: 165). In addition, Staniszewski points out that "in the late 1920s the Metropolitan Museum collaborated with Macy's and installed furniture displays in the store" (1998: 165).

Display practices and architectural approaches are also often mirrored in both institutions, dating from their early days to the recent past. Charlotte Klonk points out:

> From [the 1930s] it was, above all, the commercial world that played the most significant role in determining the gallery experience – a state of affairs that is just as much the case today. Of course, there have always existed close links between museum architects and the design of shops. The architect of one of the most influential early art galleries, the Alte Museum in Berlin, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, planned a bazaar-like department store at the same time as he designed the art gallery in the late 1820s (2009: 11).

She goes on to state "it is now possible to move from a museum to a shop merely by changing the contents – indeed this is precisely what happened with Rem Koolhaas' Prada shop in SoHo, New York, originally designed to house a downtown branch of the Guggenheim" (2009: 12). As such it is clear that there has always been common ground between both institutions, and that art's exclusive ownership of the museum is not borne out by evidence.

Despite precedents for this argument (such as MoMA's *Good Design* exhibitions) some still find this to be highly problematic. And despite this common ground often being traced by theorists, many still claim there was a time when this was not the case:

> The long history of convergence between the museum and the store is just part of a dissolution of the previously clear demarcation between the cultural and the economic. Indeed, any notion of the two institutions being radically opposed can now only be supported as an ideological proposition, rather than by reality (Cummings and Lewandowska, 2000:117).

What is suggested by Cummings and Lewandowska's remarks is that there *was* a time when a clear line could be drawn between the aims of the two institutions. However, even as one may be more commercially driven than the other, both also share a spatial framework to enhance the display of objects. Calum Storrie makes this same point, saying, "both institutions wore born out of the same modern impetus and they have many features in common: display, repetition and classification, not to mention commerce" (2006: 19). Given the rise of fashion exhibitions in the museum space already raised by this chapter, these displayed and classified objects now increasingly include fashion.

What fashion exhibitions contribute is a further cross-over between the sites of the store and museum. While art objects have a history of display in both institutions,

the concerted collection and exhibition of fashion by museums is a relatively recent occurrence that has added depth to the shared territory of both sites. While conventions—such as not touching in the museum—still separate these sites to some degree, their display practices are often indistinguishable. Historically, fashion displays inhabited sites such as world's fairs, which influenced both department stores and museums. These kinds of displays frequently combined historical and contemporary dress in environments that were both educational and commercial (Steele, 2008; 9). While there is a common trajectory generally covered in discussions of the development of fashion exhibitions, certain projects also tend to be overlooked. It is my intention to move discussions beyond the standard historical trajectory of fashion and costume exhibitions that others have covered (Steele, 2008; Druesedow, 2010; Taylor, 2004). As such, I would like to turn to another example, the *Théâtre de la Mode*. This exhibition of contemporary fashion drew on a range of display sites, including the department store.

Fashion in Miniature: the Théâtre de la Mode

The *Théâtre de la Mode* project began in 1945 and combined a number of historical techniques for the display of fashion drawn from a range of sites. Created as a travelling exhibition to support the French troops and the haute couture industry in Paris – desperately suffering due to the War – the *Théâtre de la Mode* was a showcase in miniature[14]. Replacing the standard format of a fashion show or parade, which was not possible during this time, the *Théâtre de la Mode* brought together the couture houses of Paris (through the official *Chambre Syndicale*) with artists and designers to create elaborate sets in which miniature mannequins were dressed in a new season's haute couture creations, including jewellery, shoes and hats (Charles-Roux, 2002). The mannequins were specifically designed for the *Théâtre* and were 27.5 inches high (or roughly 1/3 human scale). Aside from its unusual scale the *Théâtre de la Mode* is an early example of a contemporary fashion exhibition that drew upon other display histories for its format, including visual merchandising techniques from department stores and also the format of the theatre (figure 5).

In *Paris Fashion* Valerie Steele describes the significance of the theatre in Paris in the mid-nineteenth century as a fashion display device:

[14] I am engaging with this exhibition via secondary research material.

> Not only was there a cult of stage costume, the audience itself was on display. As one of the most important forms of entertainment for people of all classes and nations, the theater was featured as the setting of innumerable novels, paintings, and fashion plates. Here, too, the symbiotic relationships between fashion performers and fashion spectators were especially clearly expressed (1988: 154)[15].

The theatre as a site for promoting fashion in Paris was common in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gronberg states, "the promotion of Parisian *haute couture* through affiliation with the theatre (actresses clad in high fashion both on and off the stage) was by 1925 an established practice" (1998: 9). Hence the concept of the theatre as a setting for displaying haute couture that was utilised by the *Théâtre de la Mode* has its precedents.

Another historical method of displaying fashion can be seen to have impacted the *Théâtre*. Jonathan Walford describes the influence of 'fashion dolls' on the *Théâtre de la Mode*, saying that they were "borrowing an idea from the eighteenth-century French tradition of dressing dolls in the latest fashions to promote designs" (2008: 188). Despite these influences, the *Théâtre de la Mode* is transformed from a traditional (living and animate) theatre to a static fashion exhibition. And rather than dolls, used for play, the wire and plaster forms were in fact miniature mannequins. (figure 6). These scaled down versions of the full sized form were common in retail displays in sites like boutiques and department stores from the 1920s onwards. Miniature mannequins were generally found as counter-top displays in department stores, particularly within specific departments such as lingerie (Heller and Fili, 2001: 17). The mannequins in *Théâtre de la Mode* were custom designed and built (by Elaine Bonabel and Jean Saint-Martin) for the purpose of travelling, but also for displaying custom-made outfits (Garfinkel, 2002: 41).

By the time the exhibition officially opened (in an event brimming with celebrities and not unlike the Met Costume Gala) in Paris on March 28th, 1945, the *Théâtre de la Mode* consisted of thirteen large sets and 237 fully dressed mannequins. The sets were designed by artists such as Jean Cocteau and Christian Bérard and the couturiers included well-known names such as Schiaparelli, Balenciaga, Worth,

[15] Steele, however, only mentions the *Théâtre de la Mode* in passing, although she does call it a "travelling exhibition" (ibid: 272). While it is commonly called an 'exhibition', an exploration of the *Théâtre de la Mode* as an exhibition of contemporary fashion has to date been lacking.

Jean Lanvin, Pierre Balmain and Jacques Fath (Garfinkel, 2002: 46). While the purpose of the *Théâtre de la Mode* was to display a new season of *haute couture*, its display and format emulated a store display, or an exhibition much more than a fashion parade. It combines the styles and tropes employed in display sites such as stores, window displays and the theatre. The use of mannequins in static installation environments echoes department store visual merchandising practices and pre-empts contemporary museological fashion displays. The large audiences who attended the *Théâtre de la Mode* exhibition would have viewed the clothing on display as fashion - contemporaneous to the trends of the moment - and also, as the exhibition tour continued into the 1950s, the recent past.

Following its tour of Paris, Britain and the United States throughout the latter half of the 1940s and in to the 1950s, the *Théâtre de la Mode* has over time been re-exhibited and become an exhibition of a particular era; the late 1940s. Its totality as an exhibition installation (rather than just particular garments slotted into different exhibition formats) means that it is testament to its original status as an exhibition of contemporary fashion. Since its resurrection in the 1980s, the *Théâtre de la Mode* has been an incredibly popular travelling exhibition that continues to be exhibited in museums, including the Musée de la Mode et du Textile in 1988 after that institution undertook much needed restoration on the garments; the Met's Costume Institute in 1990 and the Phoenix Museum of Art in 2011, (figure 7) (Schafroth & Long-Schlief, 2002: 168). The *Théâtre de la Mode* has a permanent museum home at the Maryhill Museum of Art in Washington State, which became the final resting place of the *Théâtre* after it was rescued following the end of its first American tour in the 1950s.

Fittingly, between the 1950s and its rediscovery decades later, the sets, mannequins and all of the clothing from the *Théâtre* had been stored in San Francisco at the City of Paris department store among its own storage of visual merchandising props (Garfinkel, 2002: 67). This outcome reinforces the much closer alignment to commercial display sites inhabited by the *Théâtre* during its time. As time has passed and museum fashion exhibitions have become more prominent, the *Théâtre* has become a museum fashion exhibition in its own right. As such, it represents the amalgamation of a number of display sites, including the museum and department store, while also recalling another site: the window display.

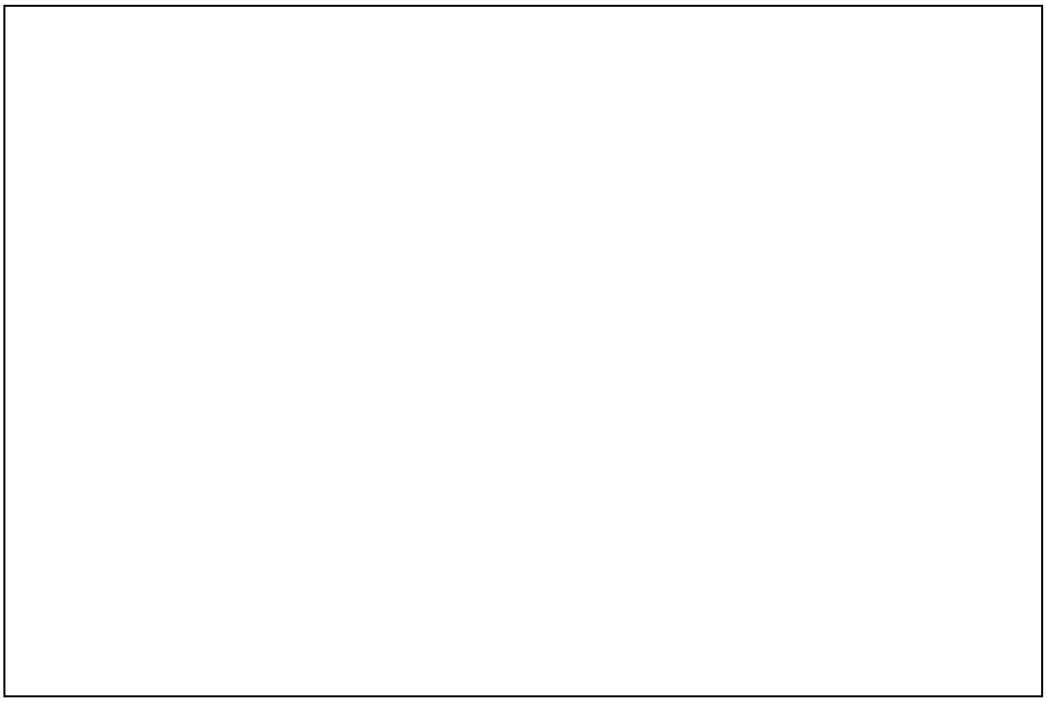

Figure 6. Théâtre de la Mode, 1945-46 (sets recreated and photographed late 1980s)

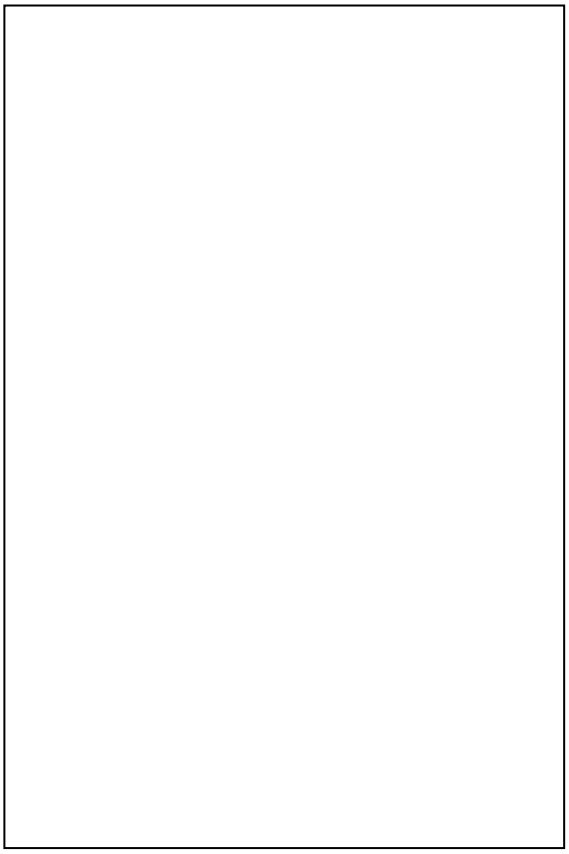

Figure 7. Théâtre de la Mode, 1945-46 (sets recreated and photographed late 1980s)

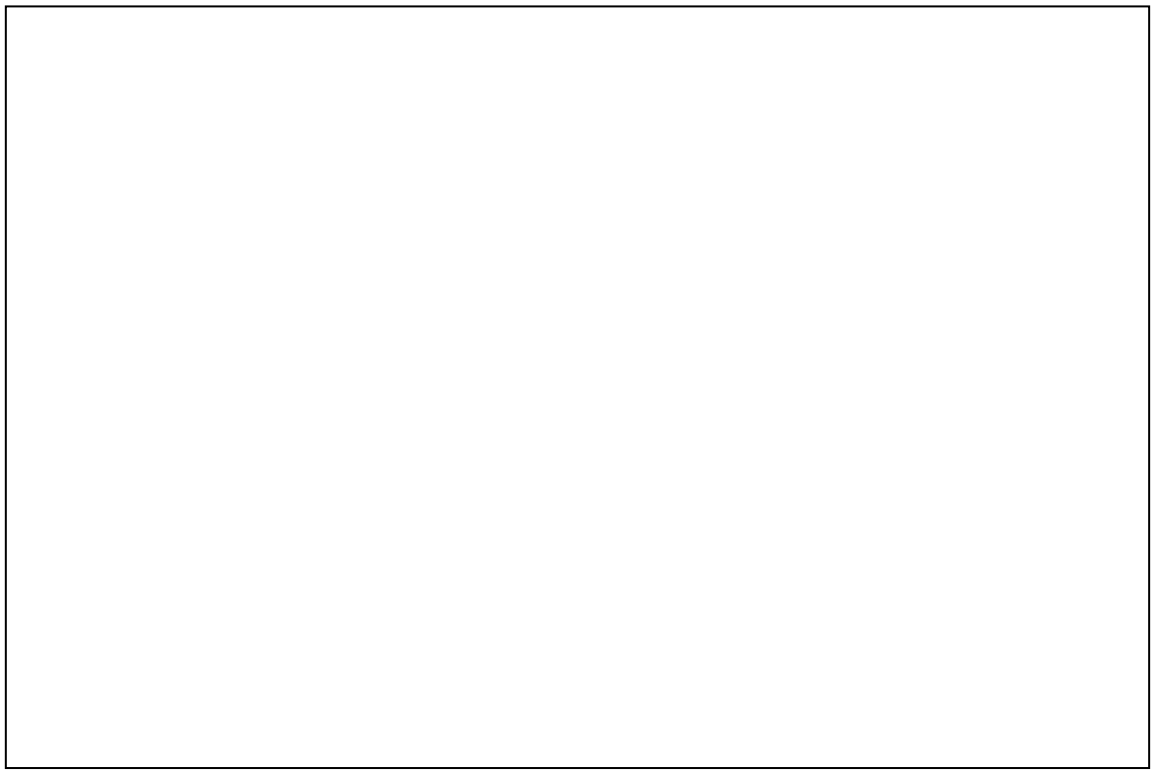

Figure 8. Théâtre de la Mode on display at the Philadelphia Art Museum, 2011

The Window Display

Although attached to the commercial space of the department store or boutique, the window display also mimics the museum vitrine or display cabinet. As such, it acts as a link between the two institutions through its display function. The window display was made possible with the advent of new technology: by the mid-eighteenth century, large plate glass was being used in construction (Taylor, 2002: 42). This had a significant impact on the architecture of stores, from large-scale rows and rows of windows at street level at the department store or Exposition, through to smaller stores, boutiques and arcades. By the 1880s, electric lighting illuminated shop windows and the practice of 'window shopping' became an event, even when the stores weren't open to sell the items on display. Not surprisingly, the profession of decorating the window display site emerged in its own right, and books instructing shop-owners and window dressers how to display their goods in the most innovative way began to appear. Also important was a growth in the large-scale design and production of mannequins, who took centre stage (Schneider, 1997).

Hence the window display can be conceptualised as a specific site within the modern city. Katharina Sykora states:

> In the context of the modern metropolis, display windows are developing into a specific space configuration. They gradually replaced the wooden display cases fitted with small windows, which were once placed in front of open sales arches, and they now draw the attention through large glass windows directly into their stage-like displays, 'peopled' by the artificial mannequins. They thus become competitive with other places of visual desire, like the museum and theatre (2002: 130).

This 'specific space configuration' is key to understanding the window as a significant location in itself. The significant display opportunities that the display window offered is demonstrated by the 1925 Paris Exhibition, in which a street of boutiques with large windows was constructed. Tag Gronberg's *Designs on Modernity* takes the 1925 Paris Exhibition as its focus, with much attention paid to the space of the shop window. The street of boutiques presented visitors with a series of visual displays that mirrored the city. Gronberg states:

> The light of day turned each boutique window into a kind of mirror… Framed by the shop-window, Paris appears as a shimmering screen which in turn frames the exhibits on show in the vitrine. Like the camera, the shop-window could capture the image of Paris on a glass surface (1998: 35-36).

The conceptualisation of the window display as a distinct space in the urban environment is echoed by the number of artists who have engaged with it throughout the twentieth century.

The visual power of the window vitrine has obvious appeal to the artist, who, even when displayed in a high-profile museum exhibition, still wouldn't receive the same level of audience interaction as on the street level in a window display. As Christopher Breward states, "the shop window became the first and most public place for display" (1999: 129). Artists ranging from Salvador Dali in the 1930s, (whose Surrealist windows were installed at Bonwit Teller), Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol all created window displays during their careers. Other artists such as Jasper Johns, James Rosenquist and Robert Rauschenberg also had their work exhibited in window displays. The famous window dresser Gene Moore, who worked for Bonwit Teller and Tiffany's, in fact gave Warhol and Johns their first exhibitions in his windows (in Taylor, 2002: 44).

While there is a direct relationship between artists and the shop window in these instances of artists-as-window-dressers, it has also been noted that the shop window space and its relationship to the viewer has been influential on a number of

prominent writers and artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. TJ Clark in *The Painting of Modern Life* (1985) links window-shopping to the development of Impressionism in Paris, while Sherwin Simmons highlights the significance of the shop window to Neo-Impressionism in Berlin, particularly in the work of August Macke, who completed a large number of works depicting window displays (2000: 49). Furthermore, in literature, Emile Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (*The Ladies' Delight* or *The Ladies' Paradise*) (1883) is largely set in the department store and focuses on its many environments, including the window vitrine. Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (1915-23) references the shop window through its material and content.

The shop window has also become subject matter for a number of photographers, who saw it as a significant space of modernity, beginning with Eugene Atget in the late nineteenth century. Atget's images of windows capture the emphasis placed on display as the window space became a central feature of his native city, Paris (figures 8–12). Since Atget's images were created, several other major photographers of the twentieth century have documented the window display. Berenice Abbott, much like Atget before her in Paris, documented the changing face of her city, New York and window displays and shopfronts often surface in her work (figure 13). Modernist artists and photographers also turned to the window display. Umbo (Otto Umbher) frequently focused on the accumulation of objects within the window environment, including mannequins, as did Germaine Krull, who documented window displays in the 1920s (figures 14-18). In the 1980s Andy Warhol created a series of black and white photographs that took their subject matter from store-fronts and window displays (figure 19). This legacy of imagery indicates a consistent fascination with the window display site. I have taken up this subject matter (windows as display sites for the fashion object) in a series of images produced during this project. These images draw upon a history of photographic recordings of arcades, window displays and department stores. These images are analysed further in Chapter Four.

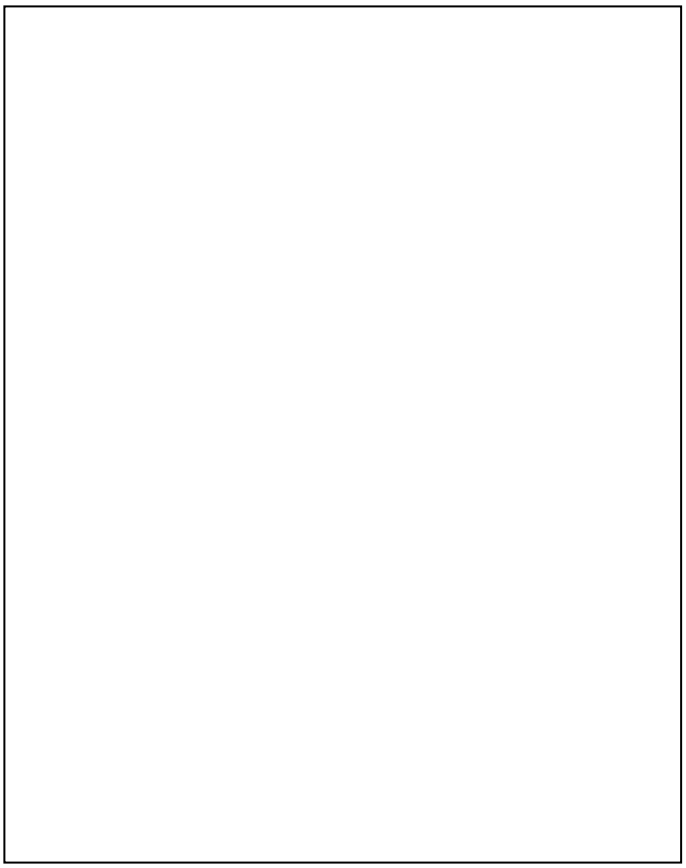

Figure 9. Eugène Atget, Boulevard de Strasbourg, Corsets (Corset Shop), 1912

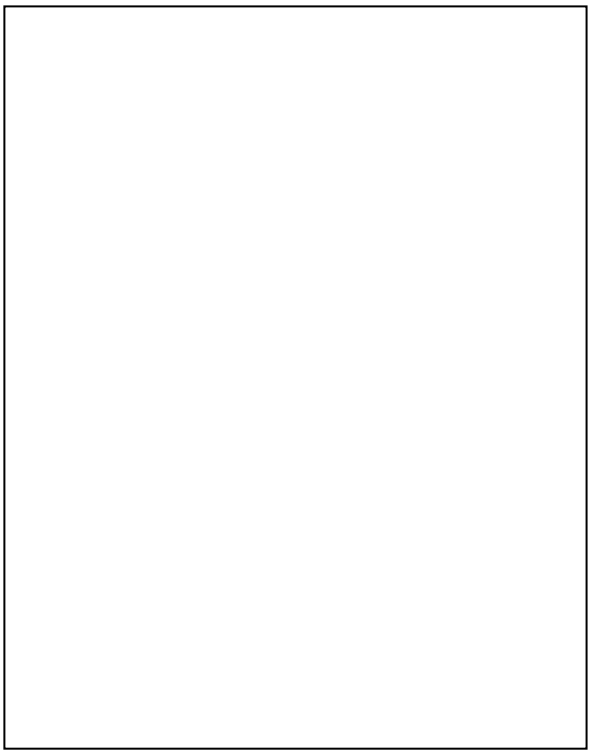

Figure 10. Eugène Atget, Avenue des Gobelins, 1925

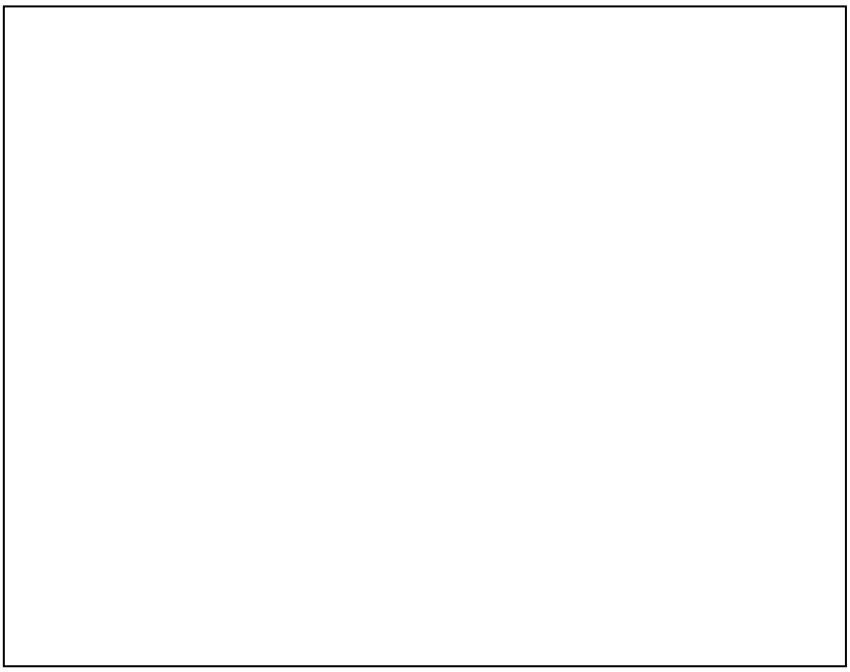

Figure 11. Eugène Atget, Bon Marché, 1926

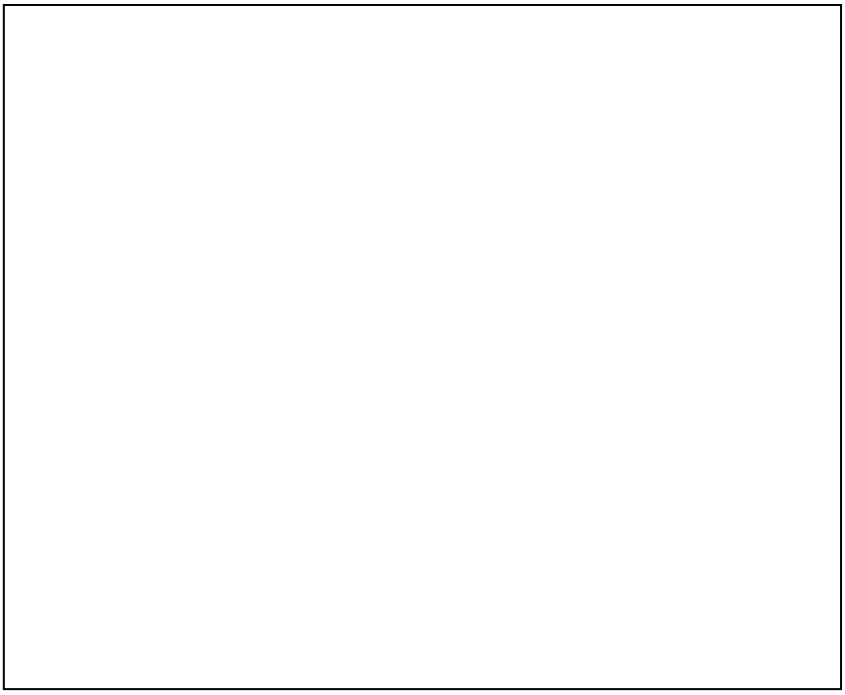

Figure 12. Eugène Atget - Coiffeur, Avenue de l'Observatoire, 1926

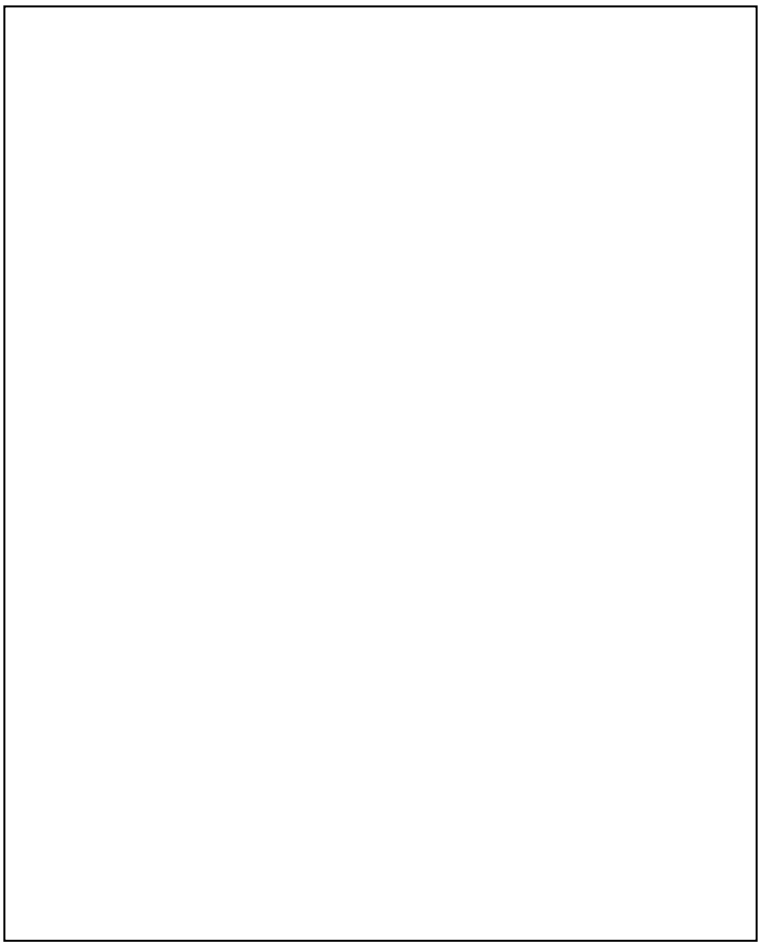

Figure 13. Eugéne Atget, 1925

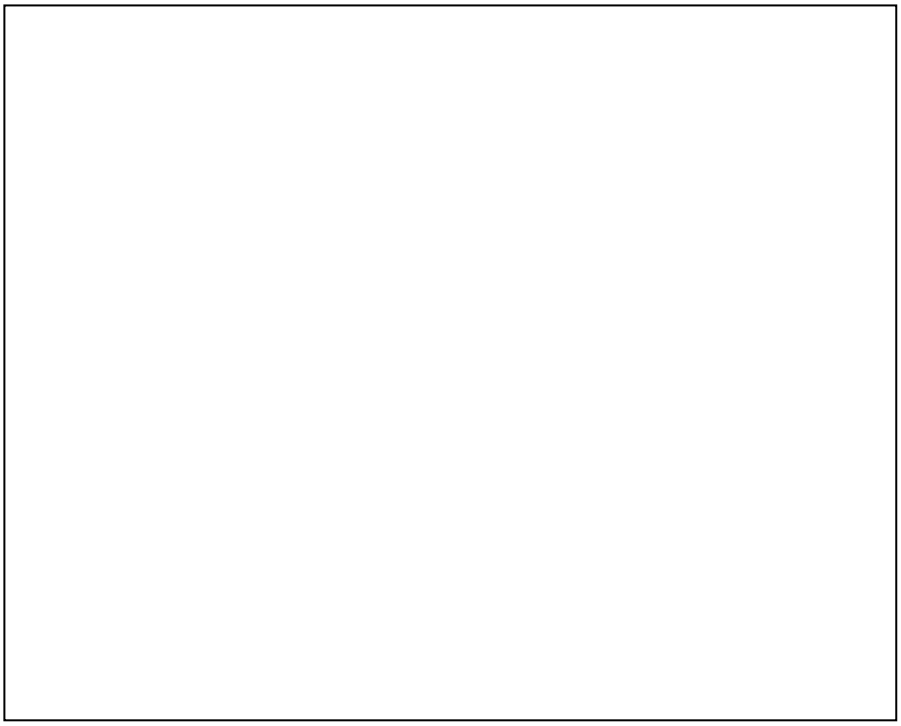

Figure 14. Berenice Abbott, New York, 1934

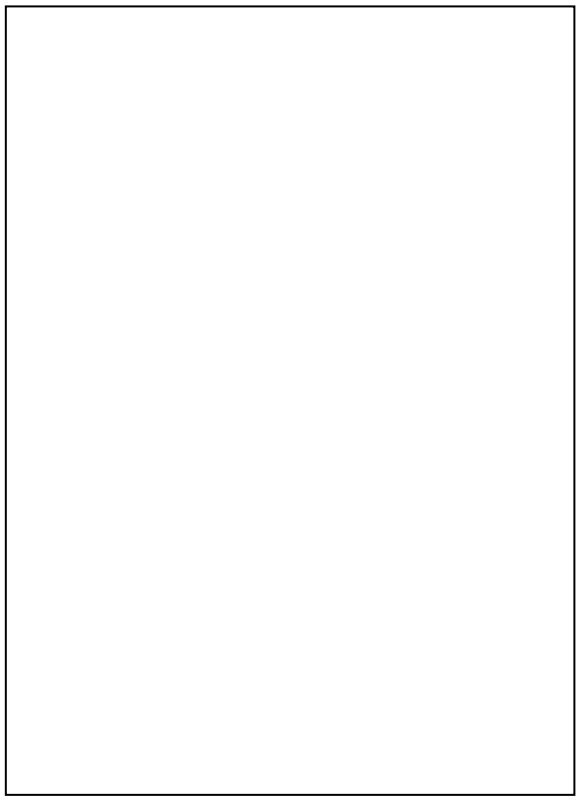

Figure 15. Otto Umbehr (Umbo), 1928

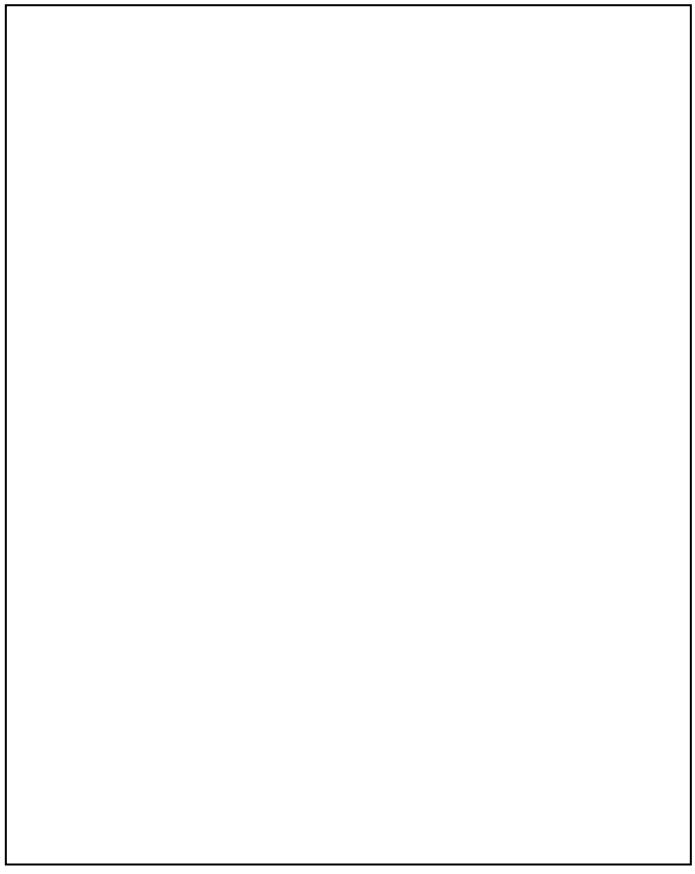

Figure 16. Otto Umbehr (Umbo), 1928

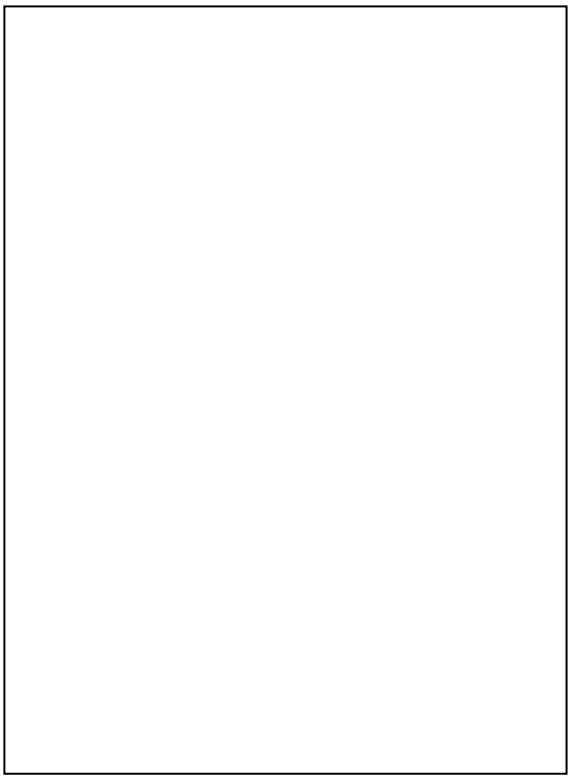

Figure 17. Otto Umbehr (Umbo), 1928

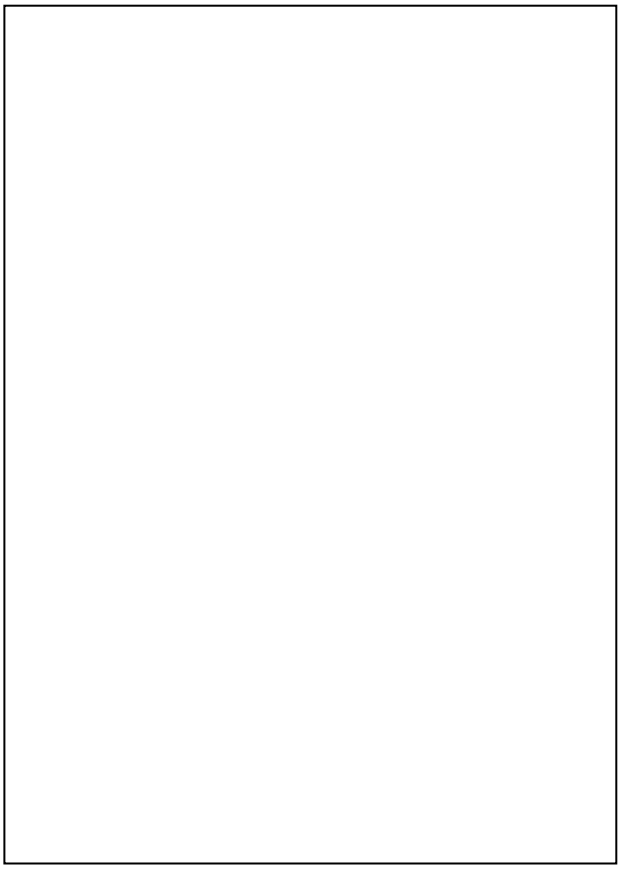

Figure 18. Otto Umbehr (Umbo), 1928

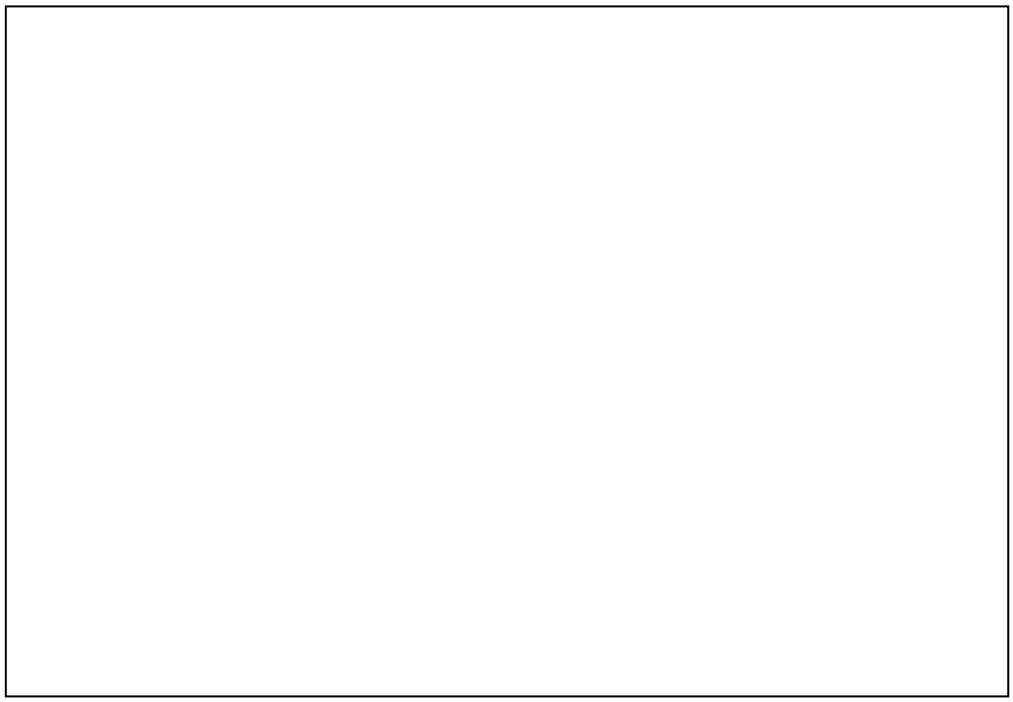

Figure 19. Germaine Krull, Mannequins, c. 1920s

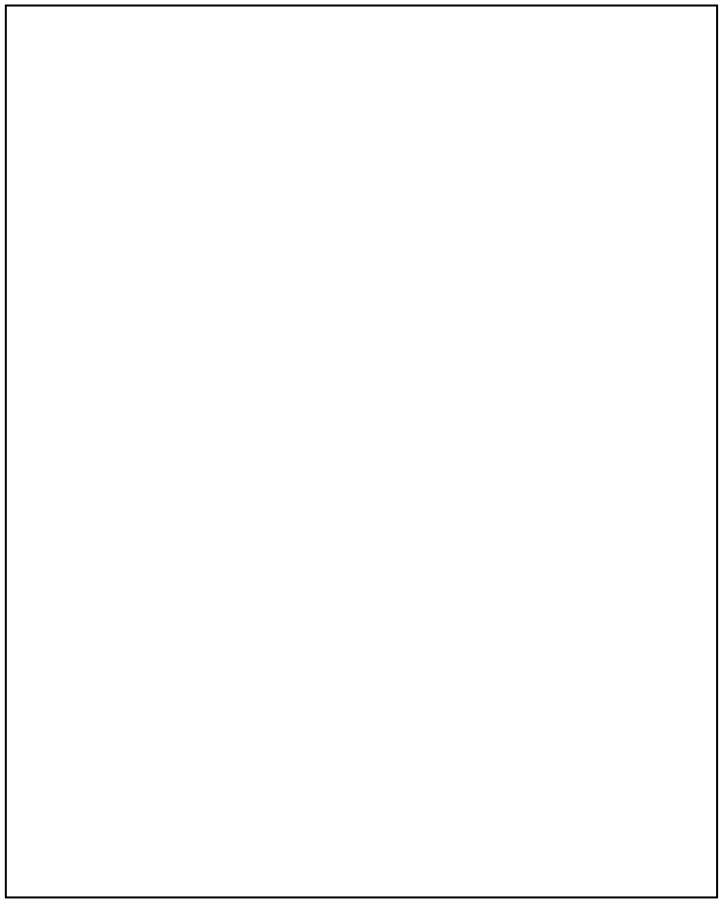

Figure 20. Andy Warhol, 1986

The shop window therefore illustrates a hybrid space that links the store, museum and artists to fashion and the street. The window display is a 'curated' environment whose main subject is fashion, and it is a site in which art and fashion often coalesce. With its relationship to the museum vitrine, but its status as 'outside' of the museum within a store environment, the shop window is an important site where fashion is curated. An awareness of the sites in which fashion is displayed outside of the museum is thus important, particularly given the multi-faceted relationship between the museum, department store and window display. Rather than clear demarcations between these spaces, fashion inhabits them as displayed object simultaneously. The similarity between the museum vitrine and window display should be fundamental to the understanding of fashion as an exhibited phenomenon, and as something viewed and understood by the spectator across these environments. As Louisa Iarocci states

> Fashion can be understood as a spatial practice, wherein its places of manufacture, display and exchange are considered not as backdrops, but as active participants in the exchanges between human agents and their material artifacts. Clothing can thus be seen as the mediator between the body and space, in intimate contact with the flesh that it covers and at the same time projecting a visual and gestural code that identifies and locates the wearer in their lived environment" Iarocci, 2009:169-170.

Iarocci's observation that fashion is a 'spatial practice' across its various environments is useful for my reading of fashion curation beyond museum fashion exhibitions and institutional practices.

Extending the reach of where fashion curation exists, the window display is consequently an important site for consideration. In contemporary fashion exhibition practice, the window display has been a significant influence. Through an analysis of *AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion* (2006), the impact of the window display site on fashion exhibition and curation approaches is clearly evident[16].

AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion (2006), The Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

This exhibition took place at The Costume Institute, which has a significant history of exhibiting fashion (as discussed in detail in relation to Diana Vreeland's work in Chapter Three). Given this history, it is not surprising that the curators following

[16] This exhibition has been engaged with via secondary research material.

Diana Vreeland have in some ways continued her legacy, stating, "Perhaps, because Mrs. Vreeland's shadow, like an attenuated toucan, continues to cast itself across our galleries, we take certain liberties our colleagues in other institutions might suppress" (Bolton & Koda, 2007: n.p.). These 'liberties' include inventive curatorial approaches, such as fabricating dialogues between fashion designers for the purpose of an exhibition. This can be seen in the Costume Institute's recent exhibition, *Impossible Conversations* (2012), which staged a series of imagined conversations between Elsa Schiaparelli and Miuccia Prada, despite the fact that they worked generations apart and have never met. Also like Vreeland's exhibitions before them, Koda and Bolton's shows embrace theatrical and overtly spectacular approaches to exhibition design. Andrew Bolton in particular seems to emphasise vastly stylised display techniques that are influenced by sites external to the museum. *AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion* exemplifies a tendency toward utilising highly dramatic display tactics to create a visually heightened exhibition environment. These environments frequently mimic the approaches to design and arrangement seen in window displays.

AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion was held from May 3 – September 4, 2006. It utilised the English Period Rooms at the Met to challenge the standard historical fashion exhibition and create stylised tableaux with both contemporary and historical (18th and 19th century) garments side-by-side. Metropolitan Museum director Phillipe de Montebello states that:

> It was a collision, however, that not only provided deeper insight into our understanding of Englishness, but one that also challenged our perceptions and perhaps even established notions of museological practice" (in Bolton, 2006: 9).

Montebello is not alone in his assertion that *AngloMania* is a ground-breaking exhibition, particularly in the context of museum fashion shows. However, while I agree that its use of space, juxtaposing of garments, props and mannequins is somewhat unorthodox compared to standard museum exhibitions of fashion, it is important to contextualise *AngloMania* more broadly.

As I've already mentioned, Diana Vreeland's legacy continues to influence the direction of the Costume Institute. The word "theatrical" is used by Eleanor Dwight in describing Vreeland's first exhibition, *The World of Balenciaga*, at the Costume Institute in 1972 (2002: 199). In reviewing *AngloMania*, art critic David Carrier likens the exhibition to an experience of theatre (2006: 48). While some see

exhibitions like *AngloMania* as a new type of fashion exhibition, I would argue that curators like Bolton are drawing on a number of histories and sites rather than setting up a new exhibition format. Aside from Vreeland's shows, the *Théâtre de la Mode* is an important precedent, as is the history of window display design. As I have already demonstrated, an example such as the *Théâtre de la Mode* was also impacted by sites and display tactics outside of the conventional exhibition and museum formats of the time and drew on sites such as the department store.

In the case of *AngloMania*, retail sites are again a key influence. Fashion historian and theorist Peter McNeil calls *AngloMania*, "an example of possibly a new type of exhibition merging art-historical research with contemporary styling and viewing practices" (2008: 65). McNeil goes on to describe the exhibition as:

> An immediate impression, image and mood… *AngloMania* was styled more like a contemporary defile or Barney's shop window than an 18th century genre painting. It did this remarkably successfully and in so doing created installations that permitted the viewer to re-imagine both clothing and spaces in new ways (2008:74).

For some, the "Barney's shop window" that McNeil likens the exhibition to is not a positive, but a negative—symbolising the museum's complicity with profits and designer endorsements. But perhaps more interestingly, McNeil highlights the shop window as a site that could enter the vernacular of the fashion curator. Furthermore, the example he uses, a "Barney's shop window", is particularly significant.

Among New York department stores, Barney's is well-known for its extravagantly staged window displays. These windows are generally associated with Simon Doonan, who is arguably the best-known contemporary window dresser. Doonan has been designing and dressing windows at Barney's since 1986, later becoming Creative Director. In 2010 Doonan's role as Creative Director of Barney's was given to Dennis Freedman, with Doonan promoted to the position of 'Creative Ambassador-at-Large'. The term 'curator' is often popularly applied to Doonan and others working at this level. An example of this comes in the Press Release (from Barney's) announcing Doonan's new position and Freedman's appointment: "Mr. Freedman will also serve as *creative curator* of the Barneys New York windows, engaging various artists, designers, and creative collaborators including Simon

Doonan for a constantly evolving mix of style influencers"[17]. While many curators would argue that the use of this term is spurious, comparisons between the aesthetic direction, styling and design of exhibitions like *AngloMania* and Barney's windows seem fair. Images of *AngloMania* and Barney's windows reveal the logic of McNeil's comparison (figures 20-23).

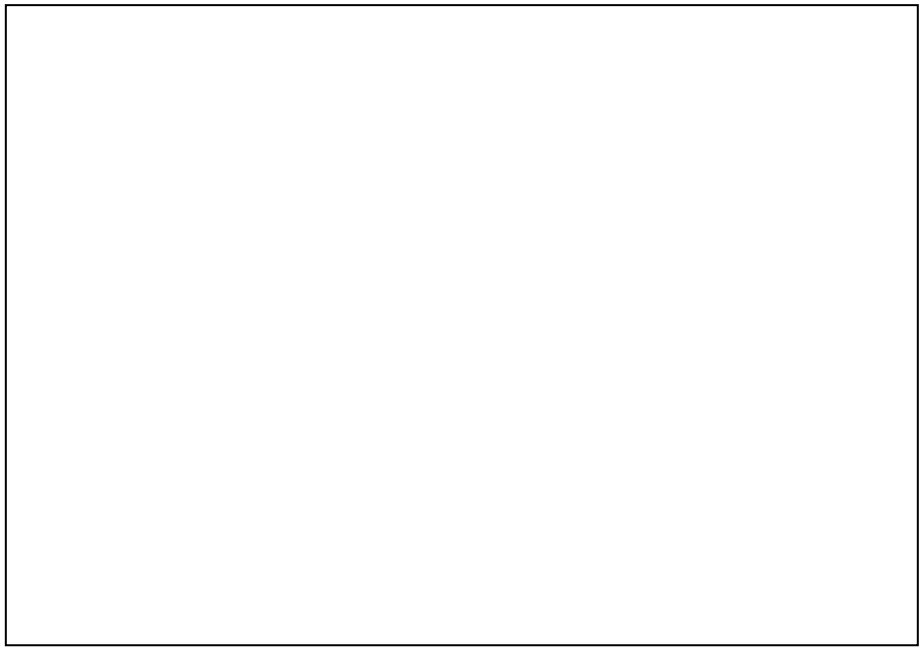

Figure 21. Barney's window display, photograph by Rudy Pospisil.

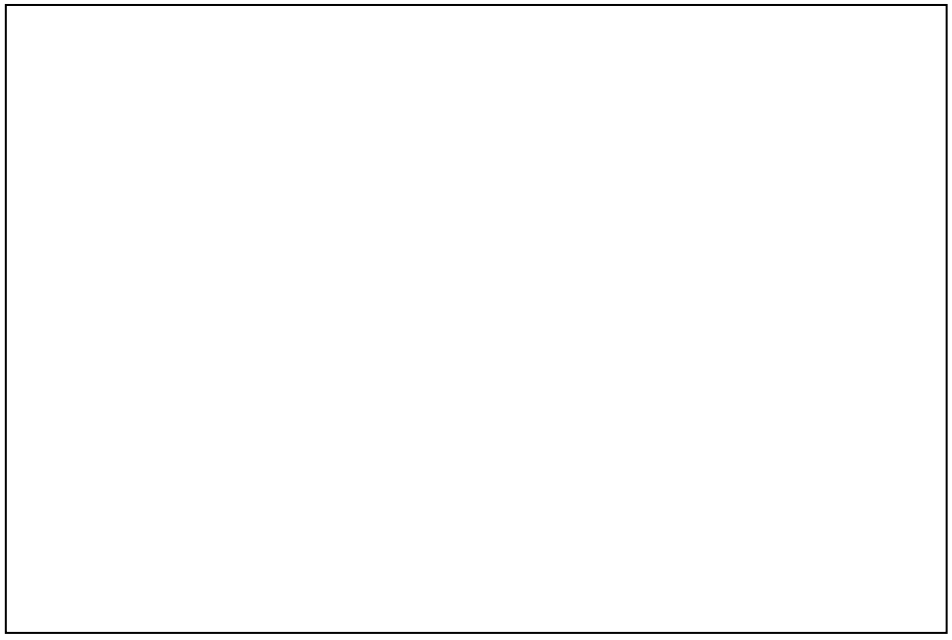

Figure 22. *AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006.

[17] http://racked.com/archives/2011/01/10/simon-doonan-ousted-from-creative-director-position-and-promoted-to-creative-ambassadoratlarge.php

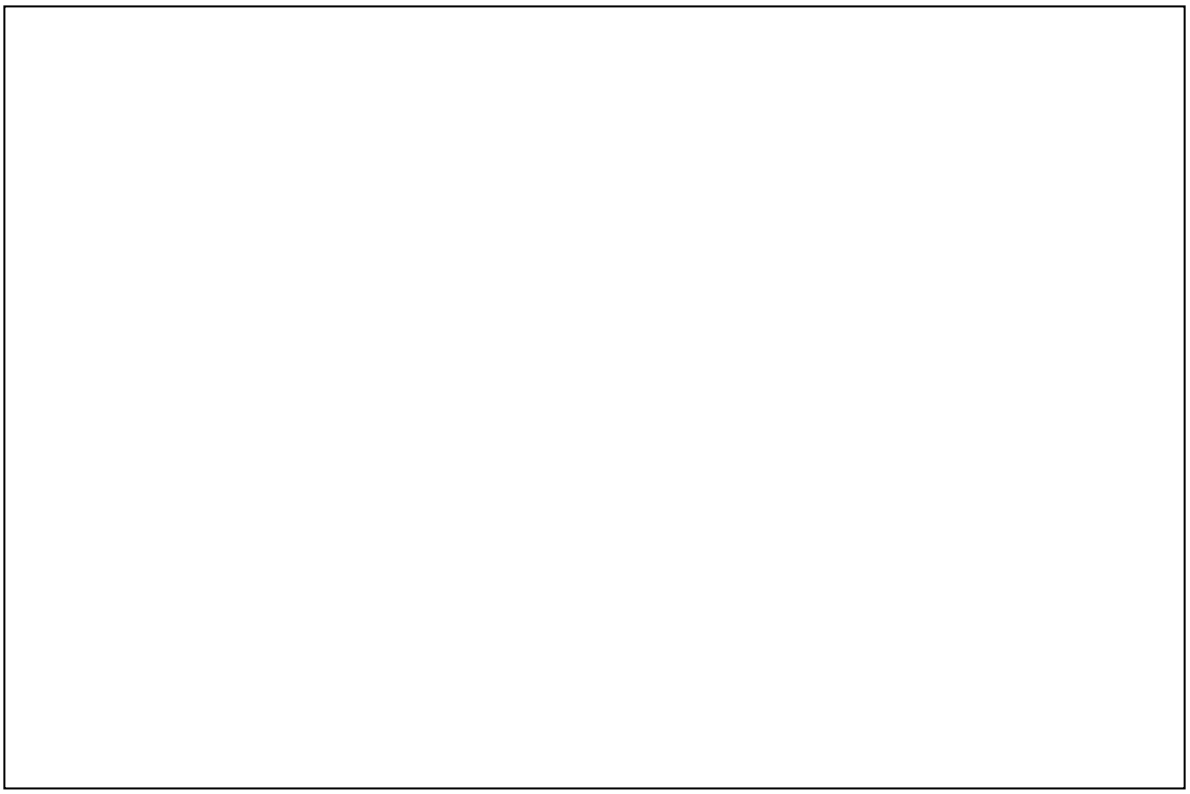

Figure 23. Barney's window display, photograph by Rudy Pospisil.

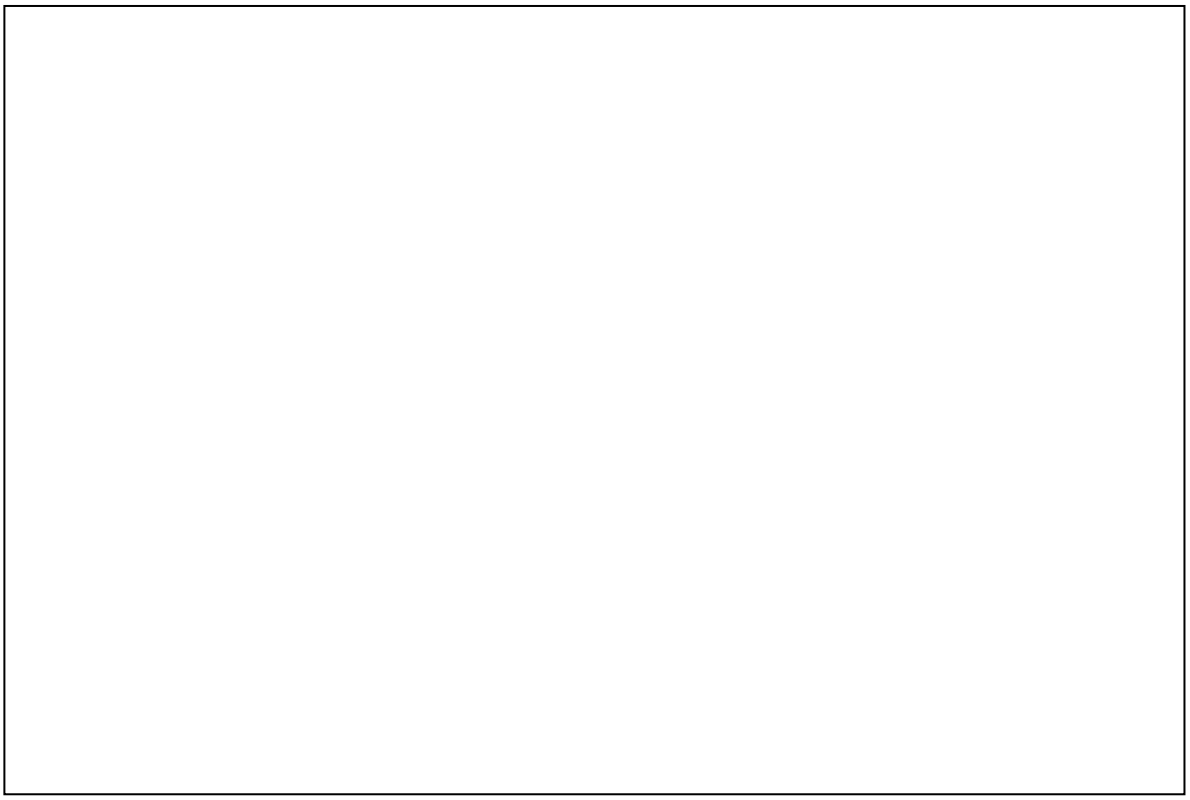

Figure 24. *AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006.

It is clear from these images that in both cases styling plays a large role, and while this is an accepted element of the window display (particularly in department stores such as Barney's) the same cannot be said of the museum. Perhaps this is the reason that McNeil cites *AngloMania* as having a 'new' approach. However, as I will establish in Chapter Three, styling was also significant in Diana Vreeland's work with the Costume Institute. This raises the question of what styling involves. At its simplest level, styling literally means the way something is styled, 'put together', or arranged. In commentaries of fashion, from magazines to journals, the words 'style' 'stylist' and 'styled' are commonplace. But serious accounts of what styling involves are non-existent compared to popular accounts of celebrity stylists. It is interesting to note that while most curators wouldn't use the term 'stylist' to describe their work, the use of the term 'curated' to refer to window displays and store environments is increasingly common. Both terms have their own cultural cachet.

The use of the word 'curated' and 'curator' has grown exponentially in recent years outside of the museum and in some cases has replaced the word 'styled' or 'stylist.' Perhaps this can be linked to the rise of high profile fashion exhibitions (Williams, 2009: n.p.). Both terms also carry a level of ambiguity as to what they actually involve. Again there is a sense of something hidden—the stylist seems to conjure a 'look', while the process of doing so is generally hidden—echoing a lot of curatorial approaches. With stores such as Barney's putting so much emphasis on their visual communication and design, and with exhibitions such as *AngloMania* utilising spectacular display techniques in the museum, this convergence will likely continue to grow. This exhibition is one of a growing number that overtly blur the line between the site of the museum and other fashion display sites such as the department store and window display. This fact continues to attract criticism and suggestions of commercial collusion. However, I argue that this blurring should in fact be contextualised through a longer history of convergence between these sites. Doing so can have particularly significant curatorial outcomes for fashion display and may also encourage more diverse approaches.

Conclusion

The influence of site on curatorial approaches, particularly in relation to fashion, is still a topic in need of further detailed analysis. The aim of this chapter has been to sketch out and raise the significance of various sites in relation to fashion curation

and display histories. Clarifying the shared territory between key sites such as the museum, department store and window display reveals the ways in which fashion occupies these sites as a curated medium. Doing so extends the terrain of fashion curation beyond the museum, and enables the debates surrounding fashion exhibitions to be considered within broader contexts. Rather than simply focusing on the problems surrounding fashion within the museum site, this chapter has sought to incorporate a range of site specific examples that demonstrate a range of approaches to fashion curation. For instance, considering the sites that influenced the production of the *Theatre de la Mode* and proposing it as the first exhibition of contemporary fashion reveals the ways in which the museum has not necessarily been the singular context for fashion curation.

Connecting diverse curatorial approaches to similar approaches in other sites, this chapter demonstrates the continuing engagement with a historical trajectory of display practices developed across a range of sites, both commercial and institutional. This point is particularly relevant to my development of the adjunct fashion curator, who engages with a variety of sites. While environments of display have been explored, equally important is the development of the individual curator's role. Approaches to curation and the role of the curator are examined in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

The Curator's Role: art, fashion and beyond

The previous chapter demonstrated the ways in which sites of display are significant for fashion curation. It aimed to expand the territory usually covered within fashion curation discourse beyond the museum. This was not to argue that the museum is not important, but rather to include further examples, such as the department store and window display. These are also worthy of analysis and consideration when examining the histories of fashion display and exhibition. This research project is dedicated to a broad understanding of fashion curation. It considers theoretical and historical as well as practical contexts, and proposes a new curatorial model: the adjunct fashion curator. This model borrows its terminology and definition from art curation (Graham and Cooke, 2010) and is distinct from the two major models of independent and institutional curation.

This chapter specifically examines the role of the curator. It addresses the history and current field of curating by exploring the shift from traditional definitions and working conditions of the art and museum curator towards new understandings that seek to define the curator's role within the contemporary art institution and beyond. This section is concerned not only with the individual curator (who dominates much of the literature) but also looks at broader ideological histories and approaches to curating. Furthermore, it specifically explores the role of the fashion curator as it has developed predominantly in the late twentieth century through the work of significant figures Cecil Beaton and Diana Vreeland. Their work is related to this project's concept of the adjunct fashion curator in order to flesh-out the connotations of an adjunct role in relation to fashion curation.

Curatorial Types and Roles

Commonly, the history of the word 'curator' is characterised by terms such as 'care-taker,' 'over-seer' and 'guardian.' In 'Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today,' curator Kate Fowle states:

> While the word stemmed from the Latin, in English it evolved to mean "guardian" or "overseer." From 1362 "curator" was used to signify people who cared for (or were

> superintendence of) minors or lunatics, and in 1661 it began to denote "one in charge of a museum, library, zoo or other place of exhibit." In each case it has hierarchical connotations – a curator is someone who presides over something – suggesting an inherent relationship between care and control (2007: 26).

Hence there is a sense of responsibility within this definition: one of 'taking charge' of objects and institutions, and working within prescribed spaces. While this definition serves to highlight the customary practices of the curator in place since the 1600s, a significant diversification of understanding the curator's role has taken place in recent decades, particularly with the rise of the 'independent curator,' generally seen as emerging in the 1960s. A further expansion in the definition of the curator and her/his role has taken place since the 1990s, when a dedicated body of literature began to emerge that sought to establish a discourse around curating. This review sketches out a schematic view of this body of literature and the practices that have informed it. It is not my aim to exhaustively chart the complexities and nuances of contemporary curatorial debates, but rather to ground curatorial discourse, establishing a point of comparison with fashion curation and emphasising particular curatorial roles and models.

As stated, the working-definition of the curator has gained diversity and depth in recent decades. To an extent this depth is also reflected in the changing face of museums, where making works of art and artefacts accessible, and even entertaining, has broadened the focus of institutions' mission statements (Vergo, 1989). At the same time, curatorial programs have been developed in arts institutions and universities throughout the world, transforming the role of the curator into a profession that requires specific qualifications. This is also increasingly true of the fashion curator, with specific curatorial programs in institutions that focus on fashion. Regardless of a curator's field, however, the contemporary position of curators cannot be discussed without first addressing the impact of the appearance of the 'independent curator' in the 1960s.

The Independent Curator and an Expanded Field

The concept of an independent or freelance curator – who is not tied to a single institution - is intimately connected to the work of curators Harald Szeemann and to a lesser extent, Walter Hopps. While Szeemann and Hopps are widely credited with changing the face of curation and transforming it into something more akin to

contemporary artistic practice, both men began their careers with significant institutional appointments[18]. It may seem contradictory to call Hopps and Szeemann 'independent' given their institutional positions, but Szeemann was fired and resigned from his early jobs. He gave himself the title of 'exhibition-maker' (a term he continued to use throughout his long career) and literally created the term 'independent curator' by continuing to work outside of the institution. This was undoubtedly an ideological positioning on the part of Szeemann, who chose to operate under his own terminology in an independent capacity.

Hopps' path was different to Szeemann's in that he continued to have institutional jobs, but frequently upset his employers by creating unconventional and ground-breaking shows (and also occasionally getting fired due to his unorthodox methods). Szeemann's independence from a single institution made him seem more akin to the artists who he worked with. Rather than representing the interests and direction of a museum, he sought to pursue his own ideas and approach to curating in partnership with other practitioners who fulfilled his curatorial vision. Hopps altered the landscape in a different way: he sought to change the institution internally, by forcing it to address its functions and aims, and by being a museum director who eschewed conventions and rules and by showing art that was not institutionally approved. Addressing the impact of Hopps's and Szeemann's impact on contemporary curating in 'The Bias of the World: Curating after Szeemann and Hopps,' David Levi-Strauss states that:

> Although Szeemann and Hopps were very different in many ways, they shared certain fundamental values: an understanding of the importance of remaining independent of institutional prejudices and arbitrary power arrangements; a keen sense of history; the willingness to continually take risks intellectually, aesthetically, and conceptually; and an inexhaustible curiosity about and respect for the way artists work (2007: 19).

Hopps' and Szeemann's influence on contemporary curating practices and discourse cannot be over-stated. Both are mentioned in virtually all articles discussing contemporary curation. In her introduction to *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, curator Heather Kouris plainly states, "the general working concept of the contemporary curator began in the 1960s when Harald Szeemann and Walter Hopps started working independently from institutions. Before that, art curators

[18] Szeemann was appointed head of the Kunsthalle Bern in 1961 (he was the youngest person to receive such a position in Europe, aged only 28); while in 1964 Hopps was given the position of director of the Pasadena Art Museum (he was 31, and the youngest ever museum director in the U.S) (Levi-Strauss, 2007: 16).

were always associated with an institution" (2007: 11). Kouris' assertion highlights the significant place occupied by Hopps and Szeemann within curatorial discourse.

The dominance of Hopps and Szeemann in curatorial discourse represents their important contribution to the field; however, it also denies other important figures—mainly women—their place within these histories[19]. I would here like to briefly mention the work of a number of significant women curators whose practices also provide frameworks for independent, institutional and adjunct curatorial approaches, and whose work has impacted my own practice. These women are: Iris Barry, Hilla Rebay, Katherine Dreier and Peggy Guggenheim. Due to the scope of this document I will not be covering their work in depth, but will rather be acknowledging their presence as important early curators whose influence is considerable.

Iris Barry is of particular significance to my work due to her introduction of a previously foreign medium to the museum: film. Barry was an early film critic who was instrumental in broadening the dissemination and appreciation of cinema beyond new studio releases. The latter was the only public forum for seeing films at the time. Barry's work in this area began with an early precursor to contemporary film festivals, which she called *The Motion Picture*. These regular events showed a number of programmed film screenings held at the Wadsworth Antheneum (the first public art museum in the United States) between 1914 and 1934. As a result of the success of this program, a dedicated film curatorial department was established at New York's Museum of Modern Art that sought to collect, exhibit, and preserve film. Barry held her position as film curator at MoMA from 1935 to 1951, during which time she was seminal in building MoMA's film collection, which currently contains over 20,000 cinematic works (MoMa Film Department, 2011). Barry thus provides a significant early context for institutional fashion curators, who have worked to establish fashion's acceptance in the museum.

Artist, curator and collector Hilla Rebay was also an influential figure in the first half of the 20th century. Rebay was closely tied to the establishment of the Guggenheim museum due to her long-held association with Solomon Guggenheim's collection, which Rebay advised and curated. Rebay's position

[19] As stated, my own practice has not been overtly informed by the work of Hopps and Szeemann, whose practices directly challenged dominant approaches to exhibition formats and concepts, while my own work has been a careful negotiation between institutions and other collaborators in an adjunct position.

became more embedded within institutional environments over time. In 1939 the first museum established by Solomon Guggenheim, called 'Art of Tomorrow, The Museum of Non-Objective Painting' was the direct result of Rebay's interest in what she called 'non-objective' art (meaning abstract). Rebay curated the museum's collection and continued to work towards the establishment of the Guggenheim Museum. She was also instrumental in hiring Frank Lloyd Wright to design it, and the two collaborated to develop the final building's appearance. Rebay held the position of Director of the Guggenheim until 1952, and the building opened in 1959.

Katherine Dreier was a contemporary of Rebay, and was similarly an artist, collector and curator. The slightly older Dreier co-founded the Société Anonyme in 1920 with Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray. The Société Anonyme "was conceived almost a decade earlier than MoMA as a vehicle for educating… the American public about modern art through exhibitions, publications and programs that included lectures and musical performances" (Troy, 2006: 255). Dreier, with the assistance of Duchamp and other artists, organised eighty-five exhibitions between 1920 and 1941. Hence Dreier offers an early precursor to the independent curatorial figure found in the much later work of Szeemann and Hopps. In a similar way, Peggy Guggenheim's establishment of a number of art galleries, particularly Art of this Century, and her role as a patron, curator and collector outside of large institutions also provides a framework for more recent independent curatorial practices.

It is arguably the position of these women within the patriarchal structure of the art institution that has seen them sidelined in discussions around the development of the contemporary curator, which often focuses on Hopps and Szeemann alone. Hopps, and Szeemann in particular, occupied an overt ideological position in their practice. Again, particularly in the case of Szeemann, this frequently mirrored the mythology around the 'genius male artist' figure that was (and arguably remains) a prominent feature of the art world. This again reveals a gender bias that goes some way to explaining the lack of early women curators utilised as exemplars of practice in most curatorial discourse. Acknowledging the contribution of these women is essential to my own para-feminist aims, as articulated in Chapter One.

Who or What is the Curator?

Despite the focus on earlier precedents in the work of Szeemann and Hopps, in contemporary curatorial discourse it seems there is no consensus about the role of the curator. Prior to the 1960s, the curator was primarily seen as an expert, care-taker or educator; but in light of redefinitions centring on the independent practices of curators like Hopps and Szeemann and subsequent explorations of the curator's role, these simple definitions no longer apply. Szeemann himself described his role as "administrator, amateur, author of introductions, librarian, manager and accountant, animator, conservator, financier, and diplomat (in Fowle, 2007: 32). In 'Editing as Metaphor,' arts journalist András Szántó claims that the independent curator's "duties and qualifications are still being clarified" (2007:70). While in his preface to Hans Ulrich Obrist's *A Brief History of Curating*, Christophe Cherix argues that "the curator's true *raison d'être* remains largely undefined" (in Obrist, 2008: 6). This nebulous state may continue to exist despite a growth in literature engaging with curator's roles, and in fact may increase for this very reason. In the spirit of Szeemann, who invented a new word for himself – Ausstellungsmacher (exhibition-maker) – it seems that most curators feel a similar need to define the particular and personal terrain in which they work. Thus in spite of this lack of clarity several 'types' serve to define the contemporary curator: the curator-as-artist, the curator-as-auteur or director, the curator-as-editor or writer and the curator-as-mediator or facilitator. These are explored below.

The Curator-as-Artist

One of the most persistent notions of the curator in the contemporary art-world is as an artist. This concept is the subject of considerable debates in recent curatorial discourse, and not surprisingly, can be linked to the work of Szeemann. Museum director Daniel Birnbaum, for instance, calls Szeemann a "meta-artist" (2005: 238). In discussing the rise of the block-buster exhibition, John Miller (1996: 272) argues that "the tactic of conflating curator and artist owes something to Andy Warhol. If business is the highest art, then the curator, as the maker or breaker of careers, becomes a mega-artist." Warhol may indeed be a forbearer, but the insertion of the 'curator as artist' concept into the discourse arguably began with British curator Jonathan Watkins' aptly titled 'The Curator as Artist' written for *Art Monthly* in 1987. Watkins sought to position curating as akin to the practice of producing art,

particularly conceptual art such as Duchamp's readymades (1987: 27). This idea has been influential but also highly contested. In tracing the issues around contemporary curating, Paul O'Neill states that, "almost twenty years after Watkins' polemic, the issues inherent to the "curator as artist" question remains one of the key debates within curatorial discourse" (2007: 21). In 1994 Bruce Altshuler (now director of Museum Studies at New York University) coined another term; "the curator as creator" (236). While Watkins and Altshuler may have seen the artist analogy as a useful one for describing the curator's role, others do not. In fact Robert Storr – who straddles the positions of artist, critic and curator – decidedly states that "exhibition-makers are *not* artists" (2006: 17).

But there are also less rigid approaches to be found; Curator Young Chul Lee sees the focus on the 'curator as artist' as indicative of a "defense mechanism of continual preoccupation of dominant power and its social, psychological, and educational production" (2007:113). Chul Lee suggests that this need to determine or define the curator as artist is simply representative of a power struggle between curators and artists that can be attributed to the growing public prominence of the curator since the 1960s. Given the centrality of power and agency that Chul Lee rightly identifies, it seems unlikely that this debate will subside any time soon. At the same time, Chul Lee highlights the underlying tensions residing in the debate. Yet however contentious, the 'artist as curator' is not the only model put forward in curatorial discourse. Another common concept is the curator as auteur or film director.

The Curator-as-Auteur or Director

Almost as prevalent as the curator-as-artist position are analogies that are asserted between art curators and film *auteurs* or directors. In "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur", authors Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak describe what they see as similar conditions between creating an exhibition and creating a film. They state "it is as *auteur* that an exhibition curator will eventually be regarded" (1996: 238). Heinich and Pollak go on to describe the shared ground between curators and *auteurs*, exhibitions and films:

> The economic characteristics of film production have several points in common with those governing the production of exhibitions. In both cases we are, in effect, dealing with what could be called an economy of temporary cultural products for mass distribution… Both cases require the conjunction of a team working under a director

> whose identity can (and this above all is what interests us here) undergo major variations: producer, scriptwriter, director, in-house curator, specialised guest curator, creator or architect (1996: 239).

The authors make further comparisons – they argue that major blockbuster exhibitions have parallel budgets to film production, while successful attendance figures for each medium are also gauged. Like Heinich and Pollak, Robert Storr argues that the curator "should occupy a position analogous to that of a film director" (2006: 16). Still others make the same case: in 'A Certain Tendency of Curating,' Jens Hoffman (2007: 138) utilises Francois Truffaut's theory of the *auteur*, developed by the director in his highly influential 1954 text "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema". Here Hoffman sees the curator as "author rather than a facilitator or administrator of exhibitions." He states:

> The characteristics of an author-director include thematic consistency of production, a strong creative sensibility in regard to how the director interprets a script, and an apparent artistic development through her/his career from film to film. All of which are attributes that one could apply to some of the curators working today (2007: 138).

Hoffman further argues that this development was borne out of similar working conditions. Truffaut's theory was a reaction against the dominant Hollywood studio system of the time. Hoffman believes curators currently working against large museums or Biennials are in similar situations (2007: 139).

In 'Curatorial Relationality,' Beatrice Von Bismarck (2006: 153) also makes a case for the curator as film *auteur*, but makes a significant point of difference, saying, "it should also be remembered that film directors and curators differ quite fundamentally on one point: in the case of the latter, no final remaining products are produced." This leads her to shift the argument by choosing a new analogy: "more like a theatre director, the curator allows a temporary constellation to emerge in which spatially and temporally structured layers of meaning are brought into confrontation with one another" (2006: 153). Thus the desire to clearly define the curator's role is at the forefront of a majority of literature that takes curating as its subject. Often there are several models put forward within the one text. Although Robert Storr, like Von Bismarck, made a case for the 'curator as film director', both authors shift their positions. For Von Bismarck the theatre offers a better match, while Storr turns to another; the 'curator as editor'.

The Curator-as-Editor or Writer

It is clear that there is a pattern to the curatorial analogies that are consistently put forward within the literature. The professions that are likened to curating tend to be other creative acts of organisation and vision, such as a film director. Similarly, the notion of the curator as literary editor suggests the management of creative tasks and competing concepts or ideas. Storr reasons that:

> Perhaps the simplest way of looking at the exhibition-maker's relationship to both the institution and the artist is to draw an analogy with the literary editor who negotiates with publishers and writers on behalf of the "best" version of work that can be attained (2006: 20).

He goes on to say, "the exhibition-maker is the first, most critical viewer in the way that a good editor is the first, most critical reader" (2006: 21). The connection between the curator and the editor has been made by others. Szántó (2007: 73) uses the framework of editing to discuss the working methods of curators. He frames his argument around the significance of storytelling:

> We have all visited shows that are too detailed or too short, too opinionated or too dry. A good curator, like a good editor, knows that such problems are due in part to how the material is presented to the audience. Storytelling is the shared art of the curator and editor (2007: 73).

Indeed, writing is also commonly explored in relation to curating. Szeemann called his exhibitions "poems in space" (in Birnbaum, 2005: 238). Art critic David Carrier argues that:

> Curating is an exercise in visual rhetoric… Just as a writer assembles a group of illustrations to display the development of art, or indicate visual affinities, a curator achieves the same effect by putting together an exhibition. And so, to pursue this parallel, just as such a writer's arguments can fail to match your visual experience, so the same may happen when a curator's claims do not inspire conviction (2007: 82).

In a more literal sense, writing and editing do form a considerable element of the curator's tasks, as catalogues and labels constitute an inherent part of most exhibitions as explicators of curatorial rationales. The concept of editing as a framework highlights the significance of choice – what is included or excluded – as another fundamental aspect of curating. Fashion curators Clark and de la Haye call this process "ruthless selection" (2008: 162); a concept that could just as easily apply to the editor's task. This process of selection or editing, and writing or framing puts the curator in a position of power, but another persistent model for understanding the curator is less concerned with authority.

The Curator-as-Mediator or Facilitator

The three curatorial 'types' discussed above portray the curator as a powerful figure whose role, influence and 'vision' may at times rival figures such as artists and film directors. While these types are frequently encountered in curatorial discourse, another role model is also commonly found: the concept of the curator as mediator or facilitator. This is a persistent idea that surfaces in the literature. Søren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen apply the title of 'the middleman' to the curator (2007: 21). In her introduction to *On Curating*, Carolee Thea (2010: 6) states "we could say [curators] are translators, movers or creators whose material is the work of others—but in any case, the role of mediator is inescapable." As with the other curatorial types discussed, it is arguable that this definition of curating is spawned from Szeemann's self-definition 'exhibition-maker'. Kate Fowle states, "updating Szeemann's description of exhibition-maker, we can now add mediator, facilitator, middleman, and producer to the ever-expanding list of roles" (2007: 32).

The notion of a mediator, translator or facilitator positions the curator as an interface between other agents; these range from institutions and museums to artists and the public. Indeed, David Carrier states, "successful curators are mediators, standing between artists and their public" (2007: 80). Lawrence Alloway makes a similar point in 'The Great Curatorial Dim-out,' stating, "the curator is at the interface of the museum as an institution and the public as consumers" (1996: 222). Hence, while the curator may be a public figure, the curator as mediator is not positioned as an overtly creative or autonomous agent. Here the curator is more concerned with negotiating or translating and thus the curator-as-mediator can be identified as an adjunct position, as I explore in my own work.

Taking Sides

The preoccupation with positioning the curator 'as' something is an over-riding feature of contemporary curatorial discourse. The above types (curator-as-artist, curator-as-director/auteur, curator-as-editor, and curator-as-mediator) are only a few of the most common propositions that are frequently found in essays about curating. What this predisposition towards establishing archetypal roles for curating suggests is that the potential complexities that could be addressed in curatorial discourse are largely over-shadowed by a desire to stake out the parameters of who and what the curator is. While addressing these concerns *is*

important, its dominance in the literature suggests that this is becoming the over-riding interest among curators, rather than simply a significant element of the terrain. A possible explanation for this presented itself when, in my attempt to read widely around the literature pertaining to curation, it became apparent that the bulk of texts about curating take the same format: interviews with curators; or perhaps collections of discussions from symposia (Müller & Schafhausen, 2006; O'Neill, 2007; Rand & Kouris, 2007; Obrist, 2008; Thea & Micchelli, 2010). These texts often project the ideological positions of individual curators rather than provide historical context or rigorous theoretical discourse about curation. This literature has its limitations; while personal anecdotes from practicing curators can be helpful to students, broader histories and theories of curation do remain in limited supply. What this literature does confirm is an over-riding concern with autonomy within curatorial studies, something doubtless inherited from the practices of Szeemann and Hopps.

The term 'independence' is key to the notion of autonomous creativity and authorship that is constantly explored in relation to the curator's role. My curatorial work approaches curating differently by straddling institutional and independent positions: I work adjunctly with institutions and collections. Working in this way has raised collaborative processes that erode the focus on a single creator who is 'independent.' At the same time, working adjunctly also acknowledges that the concept of occupying an independent position is, as Graham and Cooke 2010: 152) point out, "somewhat of an impossibility." Regardless of this fact, the notion of independence has been a central guiding concept in curatorial discourse, particularly in relation to the agency of the curator.

The Critical Curator

Aside from the prevalence of questions around 'who the curator is' that I have briefly covered above, issues surrounding the agency of the curator within the art-world are also central in curatorial discourse. In 'Curating Doubt,' JJ Charlesworth argues that

> Attention [is being] paid to the character of the curatorial endeavour itself, as something not innocent or neutral, but loaded ideologically, epistemologically and institutionally, and in which a consideration of such implications are explicitly rehearsed by curators themselves (2007: 92).

Here Charlesworth highlights the fact that curators are often aware and critical of their own working methods and locations (as were earlier curators such as Szeemann and Hopps), while at the same time critiques of the curator and curatorial practice are increasingly prevalent. This critical approach to practice and the locations in which it occurs can be linked to both the rise of the independent curator (where the curator becomes an identifiable, autonomous and ideological practitioner) and institutional critique. These two phenomena are intertwined.

'Institutional critique' is frequently identified through the work of a number of artists working during the late 1960s and 1970s who sought to challenge and expose the institutional systems of the art world; primarily the museum. Often cited artworks that embody the tenets of institutional critique are Marcel Broodthaers *"Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles" (Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles)*, 1968-71 – a conceptual appropriation of the museum that appeared in various sites – and Hans Haacke's *MoMA Poll*, 1970 – in which museum visitors were presented with questions such as "Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina Policy be a reason for your not voting for him in November?" and asked to place their answer in one of two transparent ballot boxes. These works demonstrate a radical questioning of the museum and the artist's place within the spaces and discourse it creates.

Jan Verwoert connects Szeemann's independence from the institution as a curator with the critical position that many artists in the late 1960s began to assume. He states:

> What becomes clear then is first of all that institutional critique has, from the 60s onwards not simply opposed the institution but also helped to expand the field of its agency—since, as Szeemann's coup shows, the curator was empowered to claim the position of a free creative agent, in the course of the dissolution of conventions brought about by critical artistic tendencies (2006:133).

Hence while institutional critique is often described as centring on art practice, its influence on curators and curatorial studies is also apparent. Andrea Fraser (whose performance-based art seeks to critique institutions) also explores this point (2002: 139):

> I would argue that the artistic practice of 'institutional critique'… has also been central to the formation of contemporary curating as a professional field. I see institutional critique as having developed in the context of… the late sixties and early seventies. At that time, I believe that the recognition by artists of the partial and ideological nature of artistic autonomy… became an important source of

> reflection for curators about their own status within institutions and their own lack of autonomy in relationship to trustees and private collectors, as well as the public agencies and entities for whom they worked.

Fraser's point highlights the interconnected relationship between curatorial and artistic practice in the 1960s and 1970s.

Arguments surrounding institutional critique, its history and current influences continue to circulate within art journals and publications. Its impact on curatorial practice has remained a focal point and recently its impact on curatorial practice has led to the development of a new concept: 'new institutionalism'. What is new institutionalism? Museum director Alex Farquharson (2006) explains: "many of the key independent curators of the 1990s are now running major European art centres. Their radical and inclusive approach to the function of the gallery has been coined 'new institutionalism'." Essentially they are attempting to change the institution from inside. But how does new institutionalism function and affect contemporary curatorial practice? Much of the discourse is centred around European institutions and curators and also, as Doherty states above, "a dominant strand of contemporary art practice." What this seems to suggest is that new institutionalism may be quite narrow in its current scope, limited to particular geographic locations and the work of specific artists. What does it contribute to curatorial strategies and institutions more broadly? Taking on Farquharson's point about running institutions inclusively and radically may suggest the potential for a melding of institutional and independent practice. While not referring to it as such, this again raises the concept of the adjunct curator, who can be said to straddle the dominant roles of institutional and independent curating.

If Harald Szeemann's ideological occupation of independent curating was related to artists whose work challenged the institutional frameworks of the time, then new institutionalism could arguably be more closely linked to Walter Hopps. He held significant institutional appointments throughout his long career yet also managed to consistently shift curatorial and institutional paradigms through his work from inside those institutions (Temkin, 2005). In fact Doherty makes an even earlier connection between new institutionalism and another figure; Alexander Dorner, Director of the Landesmuseum in Hanover in the 1920s: "Dorner first posited the notion of a 'museum on the move' and famously suggested, 'the new type of art institute cannot merely be an art museum as it has been until now, but no museum

at all. The new type will be more like a power station, a producer of new energy'" (2004: 3). As such, perhaps new institutionalism can be viewed as a strategy to make these connections: to flesh out curatorial interventions and approaches that contribute to a history or discourse of curating. If we see curatorial discourse as something still very much in development, then this turn towards new institutionalism seems appropriate. At the same time, the concepts behind new institutionalism – of internally transforming or impacting the institution – also offer a different approach to discourses about the independent curatorial model. Building on this, an adjunct position enables the potential to transform institutions through, for instance, working with emerging practitioners or accessing private collections (I explore this in relation to my own practice in Chapter Four).

Complicity

Institutional critique, and to a lesser extent new institutionalism, are based on an assumption of autonomy. But the concept of an autonomous artist or curator who can be in a position or place of criticality is questioned by Johanna Drucker, whose book *Sweet Dreams: contemporary art and complicity* (2005) challenges long-held beliefs within modernist and postmodernist histories of fine art. Drucker explains her use of the term 'complicit':

> The term "complicit" is deliberately provocative, since it implies a knowing compromise between motives of opportunism and circumstantial conditions—whether on the plane of production, or reference, or within institutional and social situations. Complicit formalism counters the very basis on which autonomy could be assumed… Complicity is closer to contingency, that critical term on which postmodernism based one understanding of the way works of art had to be situated within conditions of production and reception. Complicity underscores an acknowledged participation by artists, critics, and academics that contingency sometimes overlooked in its preservation of a separate critical space (2005: xvi).

Drucker's statement makes her position clear, and throughout *Sweet Dreams* she seeks to refute and redefine many of the legacies of modernist and postmodernist art in relation to the academy, critics and institutions.

Drucker's case is specifically concerned with contemporary art, which for her cannot be properly engaged with by using old methods and frameworks; particularly those that stress the unproblematic assumption of autonomy and criticality. Rejecting and reconfiguring outmoded ideas is at the core of Drucker's argument:

> The artists of the world we live in produce materially engaging, viscerally seductive, visually smart work. Ours is emphatically no longer the world from which the critical sensibility on which we've depended for so long developed its analyses. ... Many of the cultural formations that once served as targets of radical opposition are no longer located in the same place within literal or symbolic social spaces. Artistic gestures premised on political attitudes that took their shape from nineteenth-century dynamics and early twentieth-century formations are as anachronistic as the dress and manners of those times (2005: 39).

Furthermore, she states, "artistic autonomy as understood within a late nineteenth-century sensibility… was hijacked to serve the rhetoric of an avant-garde sensibility in the course of the twentieth century… Current conditions clearly require new premises" (2005: 40). The notion of 'complicity' is, for Drucker, this new premise. She argues that, 'the deeper shift has to be from a model of autonomy to one of complicity, and that change encounters deep-seated resistance" (2005: 85).

Central to Drucker's argument is her rejection of institutional critique and the notion of autonomous criticality it perpetuates. She also challenges the premium placed on "difficulty as the very sign of political efficacy without ever asking whether either of these are necessary conditions for the aesthetic success of works of fine art" (2005: 87). Central to this problem is the fact that only *some* fine art practice fits into this context, and thus for Drucker the framework is limited. Rather than excluding the artists whose work doesn't neatly fit, Drucker has attempted to devise a new, more inclusive concept, saying "the lines of resistance that characterised left-oriented political art and right-oriented conservative art in such a way as to exclude the imagery of popular media culture simply don't hold any longer" (2005: 87). By acknowledging the inclusion of the languages of popular culture in contemporary art practice, rather than dismissing them on the basis of being 'unworthy' for inclusion in fine art, Drucker rejects the dominant legacies of contemporary art practice. She states

> Fine art should not have to bear the burden of criticality nor can it assume superiority as if operating outside of the ideologies it has long presumed to critique. Fine art, artists, and critics exist in a condition of complicity with the institutions and values of contemporary culture" (2005: 247).

In relation to curating, Drucker's theory of complicity suggests the possibility of a different approach. This approach exists outside of criticality or new institutionalism or even the 'curator as artist, auteur, director etc.' in which the dominance of autonomy is questioned. Again, this can be related to the concept of

the adjunct curator. Drucker states that artists and critics exist in a condition of complicity with institutions, and arguably so do curators.

However, most of the discourses surrounding curating prefaces the autonomy of the curator in almost every instance, including those that include the word 'complicity'. At a recent conference called *The Contingency of Curating*, held at the Tate Britain in 2010, three panel discussions were held. They were –

1. The Autonomous Curator
2. Mediation as Production – Collaboration, Authorship and Contingency
3. Curating Friction – Between Complicity and Contingency

Despite the words 'complicity and contingency' being included in the title of the third panel, the panel discussed individual agency and power when working within the public realm and the position of the curator as a political figure. The terms 'complicity' and contingency and their deeper meanings and connotations were hardly used or explored. Again autonomy is central, alongside instances of redefining the curator 'as' something. In the case of this panel it the curator was 'an ideal citizen', a public figure who also embodies "an example of good citizenship" (2010: 119).

Following the panel an email exchange between two of the conference members was published. One of the authors, curator Mary-Anne McQuay stated that "autonomy, complicity, and contingency - are concomitant states of being, rather than alternatives or absolutes" (2010: 124). This statement seems one of the most realistic and useful within a discourse so concerned with nailing down definitions of who or what the curator is, and what their role is confined to. Acknowledging the multitude of positions that the curator can inhabit means that 'complicity and criticality' are not the only options, despite their dominance, and that working adjunctly may also fit in to discussions alongside institutional and independent models.

The above discussions around criticality and complicity are designed to demonstrate two over-riding debates within current art and curatorial discourses. While some curatorial 'schools of thought' may continue to engage with institutional critique and new institutionalism, others recognise the limitations of such positions. But in both instances, whether critical or complicit, the curator is an

increasingly active participant in the art world. Whether 'independent' or linked to a particular institution, curators continue to be the focus of a growing body of literature, courses and symposia. Much of these areas of engagement focus on the individual curator's role, whether as critical agent, artist, mediator or otherwise, and this can at times overshadow broader readings of curatorial histories and practices.

The Fashion Curator

While the history and practices of art curators are increasingly being addressed and theorised, the history of fashion curation - its practitioners, exhibitions and landmarks- is just now being covered by fashion theorists[20]. While this can be said for other areas of fashion studies, and even fashion history, fashion curation as a named field has a relatively short history that is only beginning to be defined. In itself, the term 'fashion curation' is still new and like the term 'fashion theory', 'fashion curation' is still not a universal term that all curators working with fashion, clothing or dress necessarily identify with. The places in which fashion curation has become a named field are those of the museum, academy and journals such as *Fashion Theory*. For instance, in 2008 *Fashion Theory* dedicated two special issues to content discussing fashion curating, exhibitions and museums. The articles contained in these issues form key literature sources for this project. Not surprisingly, the authors and academics in this scenario are often fashion curators, and there are still few written accounts from curators that reflect on their processes of practice (there are exceptions, notably by Maria Luisa Frisa, Judith Clark and Amy de la Haye[21]).

As a practising fashion curator seeking to research the history of my chosen field, I find myself contributing to the written account of what fashion curation is, what the curator of fashion looks like, and how the history of fashion exhibitions have shaped the discipline. The role of the curator of fashion is varied. As I have already stated, the naming of this discipline is still very recent, and despite the global

[20] The *first* books devoted to covering the subject of fashion curation are currently being written: Amy de la Haye and Judith Clark's *Perspectives on Curating Fashion* (due 2012) and Valerie Steele's *Museum Quality: the rise of the fashion exhibition* (due 2012).

[21] In an Australian context, several recent post-graduate projects have contributed to this area, including: Healy, R. 2010. *Striptease: an investigation of curatorial practices for fashion in the museum* (PhD Thesis, RMIT); Di Trocchio, P. 2011. *Curating the Toile* (Masters Thesis, RMIT); and Bigolin, R. 2012. *Undo Fashion: Loose Garment Practice* (PhD, RMIT).

growth in the taste for fashion exhibitions, the number of fashion curators is still relatively small, particularly those working freelance, adjunctly, or independently. As Amy de la Haye states, for fashion curators "discipline-specific curatorial jobs are few and highly prized; once such posts are obtained, curators often remain in them for many years" (2010, n.p). The rise of fashion exhibitions, alongside the rise in the academy of 'fashion theory', has led to a growing body of research and writing around the subject of fashion curating, but compared to other disciplines it is still very much in its infancy. And while museum fashion curating and collecting can situate itself within the broader field of museology, there is a sense that fashion doesn't always fit comfortably here.

For curators working with contemporary fashion, there is a living, breathing industry that is producing and disseminating the garments that may be collected by a museum curator. But while some items may come straight off the runway, the majority of items of fashion in most collections have come from an individual, whose wearing of these items can be significant in their translation in an institutional or exhibition environment. De la Haye calls this "the 'second life' of apparel" (2010), emphasising fashion's unique qualities as an exhibited and collected phenomena. She states

> Fashion and dress are socially salient media that are simultaneously intimate and public and, once worn or displayed, can be infused with the wearer's life story and the memories of those close to them. An exploration–albeit brief–of the intensely personal physical properties and emotive biographies these media can embody (unlike the new designer sample fashions) might provide some answers (2010, n.p.).

Aside from the challenges that fashion curators face, particularly in terms of display, de la Haye points out another reason why fashion is distinctive: every visitor at a fashion exhibition has a personal and everyday experience of engaging with fashion through their own clothing.

The curator of fashion may face particular challenges (acceptance of their chosen medium within institutions; display hurdles such as mannequins and low lighting; the impact of clothes that are 'off limits' to the viewer) but they are also working with one of the most popular and crowd-pleasing mediums. It is arguably the taste for fashion exhibitions in a multitude of locations and museums all over the world that has fuelled the discussions, historicising and growth in the field of fashion curation and critical interest in the fashion curator's role.

While the tangible outcome of fashion curating is an exhibition, there are other activities that must also be acknowledged when considering what constitutes fashion curating. The environment in which a fashion curator works tends to define what these activities are, but broadly they are object-centric, in that they involve the care, selection, acquisition, display and research into particular objects of (and relating to) fashion. The care and collection of objects relating to fashion has a long history, but under a different name. The word 'fashion' was in fact not used until the late 20th century to describe curatorial departments and staff in museums[22]. Dress historian Lou Taylor traces the collection of 'costume' by museums in Britain and Europe back to the 16th century.

Taylor emphasises the impact of gender in the history of the field of costume curating. The issue of gender was also discussed in the previous chapter and is a significant recurring theme surrounding the development of fashion curatorial practice. Taylor points out that it was women who created this professional role within museums (2004:314). These female 'professionals' were not appointed until the mid-twentieth century, and it was not until the 1970s that exhibitions of contemporary fashion took place. As such, the value placed on objects of clothing that museums historically acquired tended to promote a regional specificity (ie. a particular fabric production or manufacturing process unique to the museum's locale), or in other cases were tied to well-known historical figures, such as Royal families' garments, military uniforms, etc. While this historical trajectory is significant, it is only in more contemporary settings that the role of the fashion curator comes to the fore.

As already established in this review, Szeemann and Hopps are crucial precedents for understanding the continuing conceptualisation of the art curator's role. In a similar way, there are two seminal figures in the development of the fashion curator's role: Cecil Beaton, and Diana Vreeland. Their involvement with large museums in the 1970s and 80s provides an important context for understanding the growth of fashion curation, and the specific role of the fashion curator. Vreeland and Beaton are also significant as early incarnations of the adjunct fashion curator.

[22] Indeed the word 'fashion' often isn't used, with many curatorial departments still using terms such as 'costume' or 'dress'. Generally speaking the word 'fashion' is applied to curatorial departments, and curators, who work with contemporary and modern dress (from the late 19th – 21st centuries). 'Costume' tends to connote historical (before the rise of the 'fashion designer' in the mid 19th century) garments and also relies on a traditional curatorial approach to the display and understanding of these garments. These practices are outside of the experience and scope of this project, but have been covered elsewhere.

Both were outsiders to the high-profile museums in which they worked, but the exhibitions they produced have left an indelible mark on fashion curation.

It is difficult to overstate the departure that Beaton and Vreeland took from the museum displays of costume of their time (which were highly infrequent and characterised clothing as historical and not 'fashion'). I believe this is due to their lack of knowledge about museological/institutional conventions and individual working practices that valued a 'grand vision.' Both arrived at their museums with ideas concerning fashion display that were new to the museum, but not new to them. Thus the 'new' ideas that Beaton and Vreeland brought to their exhibition endeavours need to be understood as indicative of their respective visual styles developed outside of the museum. Through their work with museums in an adjunct capacity, these external approaches and visual languages were introduced into the institutional environment. Both Vreeland and Beaton conjured spectacular worlds through visual means for their viewers. Vreeland's work as a fashion editor was about drama, juxtaposition and spectacle. Beaton's work as a photographer, stage, interior and costume designer prefaces the 'set' as an arrangement device for fashion. Beaton's creation of the first museum exhibition of contemporary fashion should thus be viewed in relation not only to the museum, but also in relation to its other influences. At the same time, Beaton's work establishes an early working model for the contemporary fashion curator, particularly in regards to independent and adjunct approaches.

Fashion: An Anthology by Cecil Beaton, 1971

While the 20th century saw the introduction of dedicated departments devoted to clothing and fashion collection and care, the first museum fashion exhibition of contemporary and modern clothing did not take place until 1971. It was not curated by a museum employee, trained curator, or historian, but by Cecil Beaton, the acclaimed photographer, interior, stage and costume designer (Beaton, 1971). Beaton approached the V&A (an institution devoted to the decorative arts, but that did not (yet) collect contemporary fashion) in 1969, writing a letter to the museum's director with a revolutionary idea, to amass "the best of women's fashions of today" (in de la Haye, 2006: 130). The source for these 'women's fashions of today' were predominantly Beaton's friends, clients and acquaintances; socialites, designers, fashion-world figures and clients, celebrities and royalty.

While the V&A's collection had privileged exemplary design in the decorative and applied arts—favouring textiles over garments—Beaton was interested in collecting fashion. This concept was new to the institution and was arguably realised due to what I consider to be Beaton's adjunct position. Beaton navigated between the institution and his own network to curate the exhibition. The exhibition was called *Fashion: an Anthology by Cecil Beaton.*

Due to the social class of women that donated their items to Beaton, his exhibition contained many haute couture pieces. These pieces were intimately tied to his circle of friends and contacts who sought high-end fashion and often had close relationships to the couturiers who clothed them. Beaton chose these women as benefactors for his exhibition because their way of living, and dressing, appealed to his own sensibility. This was his milieu. At the same time, the pieces he collected were not just beautiful clothes that displayed the design prowess of international designers, but were owned and worn objects, given specifically to Beaton for the purpose of his show. As Amy de la Haye points out, many of these garments "had been cut and stitched to fit the individual clients' bodies perfectly. As worn clothes, each garment bore imprints and possessed its own biography; many were poignant holders of personal memory" (2006: 132). In the end Beaton collected hundreds of items – 405 outfits and 40 accessories (Beaton, 1971). While exhibition itself was very large, not everything Beaton collected was displayed. Regardless, all of these valuable items were given to the V&A. This formed the backbone of the museum's now world-renowned collection of modern and contemporary fashion. As an adjunct intermediary between the institution and the individuals whose clothing he collected, Beaton was thus able to introduce an entirely new element to the V&A's institutional direction[23].

Despite the significance of Beaton's exhibition, it is often neglected in discussions of the history of contemporary museum fashion exhibitions and the development of the field of fashion curation. The history of fashion curation (recent though it is) is generally told through the contentious history of fashion in the museum (see Anderson (2000); Steele (2008); Stevenson (2008)). In this narrative the work of another fashion exhibition visionary, Diana Vreeland, is privileged over Beaton's

[23] This is a feature of working adjunctly that is also reflected in my curatorial practice. For instance, my exhibitions for the QUT Art Museum have propelled a museum dedicated to collecting and exhibiting art into exhibiting fashion for the first time. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Fashion: An Anthology. Vreeland's shows - dating from her appointment to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute as a 'Special Consultant' in 1972 - are often recounted as the first contemporary fashion exhibitions. However, Beaton's exhibition took place in 1971. It is therefore important to acknowledge Beaton's exhibition as the first in the narrative of contemporary museum fashion exhibitions[24].

Given that *Fashion: An Anthology* is the first exhibition of contemporary fashion in a museum environment, it would be easy to imagine that its approach would be considered dated by current standards. However, Beaton's show continues to be relevant to recent curatorial approaches. One example of this is the recent exhibition, *Hats: An Anthology by Stephen Jones* (2009) at the V&A, which used Beaton's show as an inspiration and framework (like Beaton, milliner Stephen Jones acted in an adjunct capacity to realise this exhibition). Beaton can thus be identified as potentially the first adjunct fashion curator. He worked with the museum, but was himself a figure outside of the museum. Rather than solely being an exhibition of the work of many of the twentieth centuries' key designers, or a biographical exhibition of 'famous people's clothing', or even an exhibition of one famous person's selection of clothing, *Fashion: an Anthology* combined all of these formats in order to explore what an exhibition of contemporary fashion could be[25]. Beaton had museum support for the realisation of the exhibition[26], but developed the concept for the show, approached the institution, sourced, secured and selected the garments that were included and used his personal connections and stories as the curatorial rationale for the exhibition. Without these connections, the collection of clothing that resulted from *Fashion: An Anthology* would not exist today.

Although the design of the exhibition (figure 24 – 26) didn't rely on the identity of the owner of each garment, Beaton's approach to the selection of clothing was highly personal. He knew, admired and had worked with the figures whose clothing he sought for *Fashion: An Anthology*. As a curator envisaging Beaton's process of collecting the garments, I imagine it would have been in some way auto-

[24] Amy de la Haye also makes this point in her article 'Vogue and the V&A Vitrine,' 2006.
[25] While Beaton's exhibition contained contemporary and historical pieces, it displayed and conceptualised them as fashionable, rather than historical costume.
[26] For example, Madeleine Ginsburg (the V&A's costume specialist) and Avril Hart (Museum Assistant in the Department of Textiles) worked closely with Beaton (de la Haye, 2006: 130).

biographical. Clothing was clearly central to Beaton's life and career, and as such his understanding of the significance of fashionable garments and their histories as worn clothing is not surprising. One of the outfits collected by Beaton and shown in the exhibition came from Diana Vreeland, (a 1930s sequined black Chanel suit) who was then editor of American *Vogue*. She would go on to become the world's second (but arguably most notorious) creator of contemporary museum fashion exhibitions when appointed Special Consultant to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute in 1972[27].

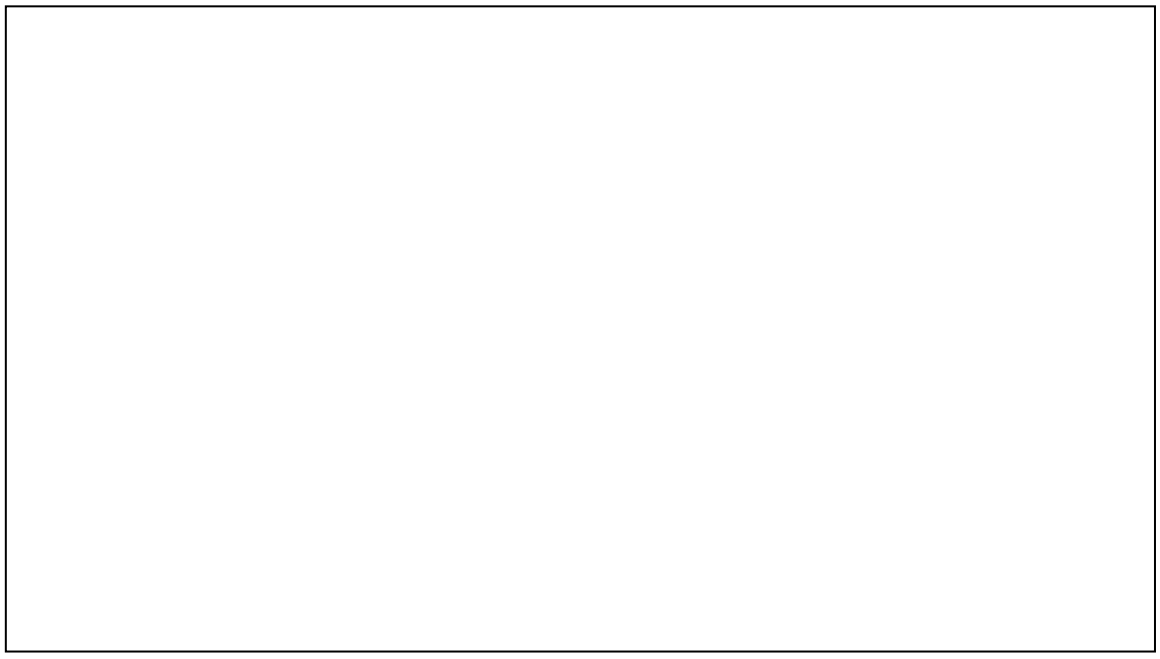

Figure 25. The 'Schiaparelli and Surrealism' section of Fashion: An Anthology by Cecil Beaton, 1971

[27] There are conflicting accounts of this date. Some sources say 1972, others 1973. In Eleanor Dwight's *Diana Vreeland* the negotiations for Vreeland's appointment take place in Spring of 1972 (2002: 190). Vreeland's first exhibition, *The World of Balenciaga*, took place in 1973.

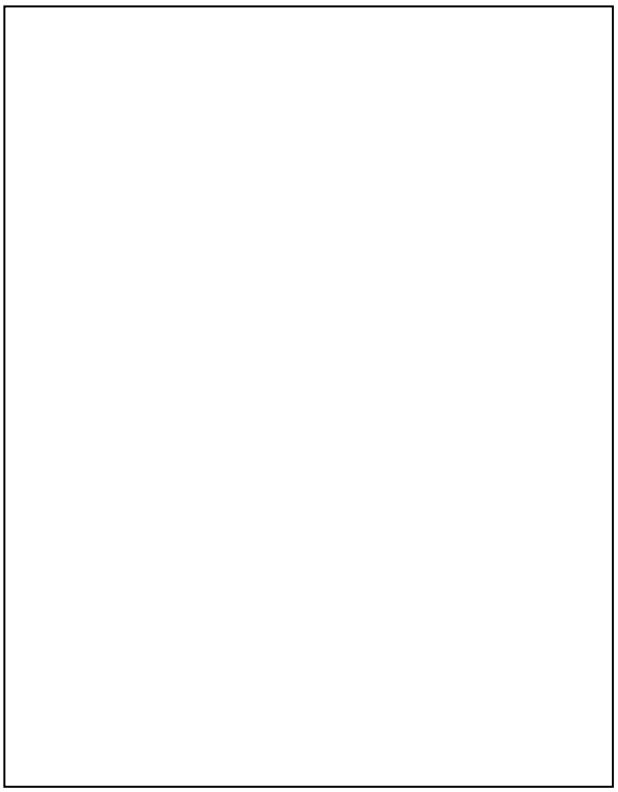

Figure 26. Cecil Beaton at the entrance of his exhibition, V&A, 1971.

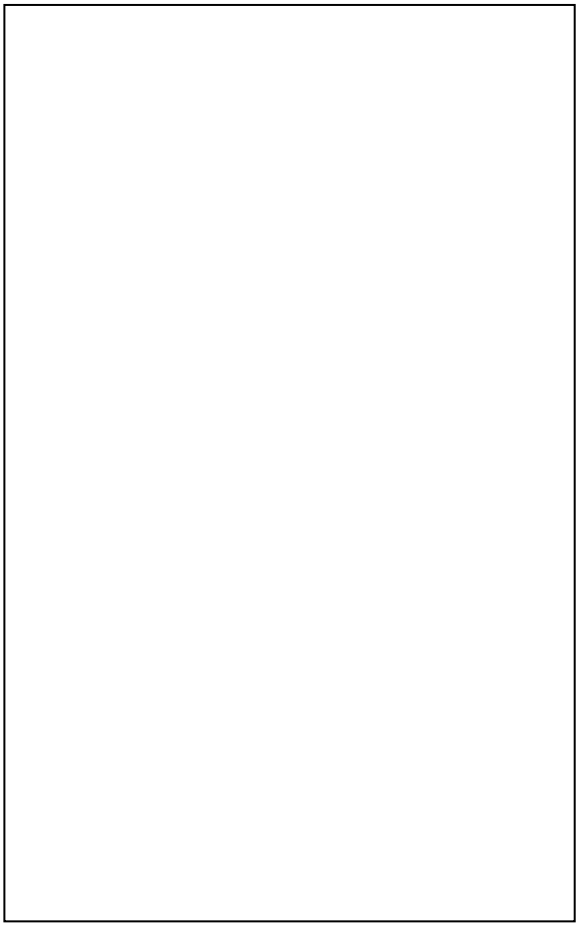

Figure 27. Fashion: an anthology by Cecil Beaton, 1971

Diana Vreeland & The Costume Institute, 1972 – 1989

While Cecil Beaton is often overlooked in histories of fashion curation, Diana Vreeland occupies a similar (ubiquitous) position to that of Harald Szeemann. Vreeland's impact on the field and conceptualisations of the role of the fashion curator continue to populate the literature. Vreeland was already an infamous fashion magazine editor before being hired as a Special Consultant at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1972. Working as Fashion Editor for *Harper's Bazaar* (1938-1962) and Editor-in-Chief of *Vogue* (1963 – 1971), Vreeland remains notorious for her eccentric and extravagant behaviour. But it is her position at the Costume Institute that remains important to those addressing the role of the fashion curator and the relationship between fashion and the museum. Vreeland's legacy lives on in discussions of fashion's overt and covert place in the museum. The influence of her time at the Costume Institute can be found in almost every article on the subject written in the last two decades.

Vreeland is often recorded as being responsible for the rise of the contemporary fashion exhibition, and articles on this topic have simply ignored, or at best barely mentioned Beaton's exhibition. As indicated earlier, Jean L Druesedow[28] ignores Beaton's groundbreaking exhibition and states, "A new era of dress exhibition was launched in 1972, when fashion editor Diana Vreeland became the special consultant for exhibitions at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York" (2010, n.p.). Vreeland may overshadow Beaton in the case of museum fashion exhibitions, but it is important to fully acknowledge Vreeland's knowledge of Beaton's V&A show. Beaton and Vreeland were close friends and the timing of Beaton's exhibition is telling. One year later Vreeland was creating her own exhibitions at the Costume Institute. But while Beaton's show seemed to be received without scathing criticism, Vreeland's exhibitions aroused fervent ridicule and continue to do so[29].

What made Vreeland's reign so controversial was a combination of factors, not least of all an enormous shift in her approach to curating fashion, which was in

[28] Who actually worked with Vreeland in the 1980s as a curator at the Costume Institute.
[29] The most obvious example is Deborah Silverman's book *Selling Culture: Bloomingdale's, Diana Vreeland and the New Aristocracy of Taste in Reagan's America* (1986), whose main argument revolves around attacks on Vreeland's fashion exhibitions.

stark contrast to the conventions of the time. Rather than presenting the typical, well-researched, chronological display of historical costume (a reasonably common occurrence during the 1960s in American museums such as the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and even at the Metropolitan Museum of Art), Vreeland's approach placed a premium on spectacular visual engagement, often at the expense of curatorial convention and even fact. Vreeland coined the term "faction" to describe her memoirs—a blending of fact and fiction. She also said, "Never worry about the facts, just project an image to the public" (Vreeland in Steele, 1997: 108). The combination of Vreeland's seemingly flippant attitude to research, along with the inventiveness and radical change that her exhibitions signalled, made institutional hostility towards her inevitable[30]. It also seems likely that some of this hostility came from the fact that Vreeland was partnered with one of the world's most famous art museums, while Beaton was working with the V&A; a decorative arts museum[31]. Like Beaton, Vreeland is never referred to as a curator; and due to their lack of formal training, it's certain that this term was never offered[32]. Also like Beaton, Vreeland was an outsider to the museum, despite her long partnership with The Met. In this sense, they are both early incarnations of the adjunct fashion curator.

In her years of working with the Costume Institute, Vreeland created a total of twelve fashion exhibitions. She is credited with inventing the single-designer blockbuster exhibition, which began with her first exhibition in 1973, *The World of Balenciaga* (Stevenson, 2008: 222). Vreeland's focus on single designers, in exhibitions approximating the art-museum's retrospective of 'genius' artists, was, and remains, contentious. As N.J. Stevenson notes:

> Fashion exhibition work has been repeatedly attacked by its dissenters as having the gall to emulate the hallowed halls of the art world, a much-discussed issue and one guaranteed to set fashion curators of today on the defensive (2008:223).

[30] It is wrong, however, to assume that Vreeland did not research her exhibitions at all. Dwight recounts her trip to Paris in 1972 to research the Balenciaga show, visiting other costume collections, securing loans and meeting with Balenciaga's colleagues (2002: 203).

[31] The current Costume Institute curators point out that Vreeland was in fact banished by the V&A, stating, "especially notable for his public repudiation of her approach was Sir Roy Strong, the director of the Victoria and Albert Museum. In retrospect, her free-wheeling interpretations of fashions past would not fly in our galleries today, but neither would Sir Roy be allowed to wear an 18th century man's court ensemble from the V&A's collection to a bal masque!" (Koda & Bolton, 2007: n.p).

[32] Like Beaton, Vreeland had museum staff to support her. In the case of Vreeland, one staff member was particularly important; Stella Blum, the Costume Institute's head curator. Blum and Vreeland often disagreed fervently, but their partnership produced highly successful exhibitions.

Despite this, *the World of Balenciaga* was a huge success for the museum. The exhibition received high audience attendance (her exhibitions broke the Met's attendance records) and were consistently popular. Like all of Vreeland's shows, it stayed up for nine months, giving viewers the opportunity for repeat visits. This duration of display would no longer be considered safe museum practice, but Vreeland's attendance records remain impressive (Bolton & Koda, 2007, n.p.). While criticism towards Vreeland's approach remains current today, much of the response at the time was positive. The level of publicity the exhibition received raised the profile of the Costume Institute, making it easier to secure vital funding in the future. And Vreeland's impressive network allowed her to procure resources, loans and people they otherwise would not have had access to. Again, this mirrors the concept of an adjunct curator, working between independent and institutional networks. For instance, Vreeland secured funding from Halston ($12,000) to transfer sixteen hours of 35mm to 16mm film of a documentary on Balenciaga by Tom Kublin, shown throughout the exhibition's duration. And for the exhibition catalogue Vreeland enlisted Priscilla Peck, the art director of *Vogue* (Dwight, 2002: 206.)

The Balenciaga exhibition was ground-breaking for its mix of historical research with theatrical display techniques. A large white horse (prop) dressed in armour from the museum's collection took centre stage in the exhibition. The walls were painted in Balenciaga's signature colours. Flamenco music played and Balenciaga's perfume wafted through the galleries. The use of scent was a particular penchant of Vreeland's as she saw fashion as multi-sensory. This of course would never be allowed today, however, it signals Vreeland's desire to engage viewers in fashion exhibitions in new ways. Vreeland also included paintings from the permanent collection of the museum by artists whose work had made an impact on Balenciaga's design; Goya, Picasso and Velásquez. With Balenciaga's death still a recent event (he died in March, 1972), Vreeland's exhibition was a homage and celebration of a figure whose work had been iconic throughout her career as a fashion editor. It was, nevertheless, a new approach; prior to Vreeland's exhibition fashion designers had not been deemed worthy of museum shows.

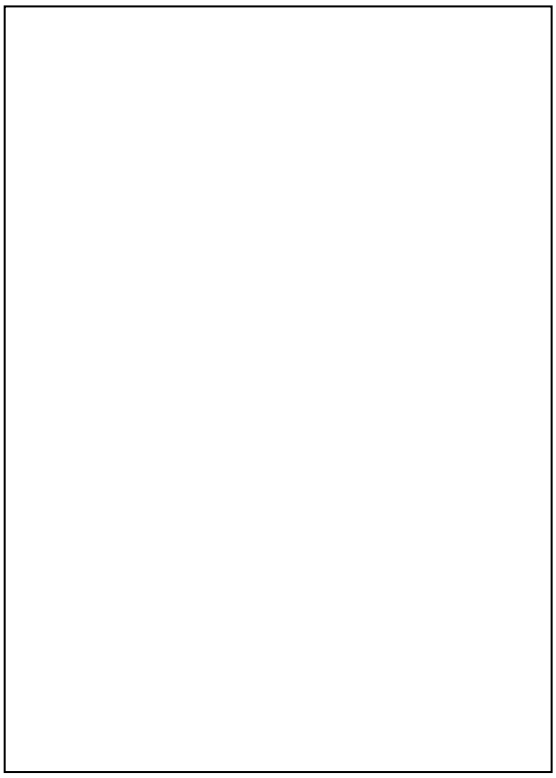

Figure 28. Twenty-five Years of Yves Saint Laurent, catalogue photograph by Duane Michals, 1983

Vreeland continued this pattern and produced another exhibition that focused on a single designer in her *Twenty-Five Years of Yves Saint Laurent* show in 1983[33]. This exhibition was another key moment in the history of fashion exhibitions due to the fact that it was the first time a major museum (the Met) had allowed a retrospective of the work of a single *living* designer. This perhaps explains why Vreeland's Balenciaga show is often overshadowed by her Yves Saint Laurent exhibition, which took place ten years later[34]. Installation and catalogue images from this exhibition show-case Vreeland's signature repertoire of styles that she had transferred from her work as an editor into the museum (figure 27). When displaying Saint Laurent's famous Mondrian inspired 1960s shift dresses, Vreeland placed them almost flat on the wall, in a row of two dimensional cut-out mannequins that were mounted to the walls like paintings. She displayed Saint Laurent's dresses alongside the Mondrian paintings that had inspired them (figure 28).

[33] These two single-designer exhibitions book-ended her career at the Costume Institute.

[34] Both Valerie Steele (in 'Museum Quality: The Rise of the Fashion Exhibition') and Elizabeth Wilson (in 'Costuming Clio') mention only the Yves Saint Laurent show when discussing retrospective exhibitions, and do not mention the Balenciaga show. While the YSL exhibition *is* highly significant as the first retrospective of a living designer, exhibitions of living *or* dead fashion designers were unusual practice at this time.

Figure 29. Installation photograph, *25 Years of Yves Saint Laurent*, 1983

Despite their innovation, Vreeland's exhibitions have been continually attacked. The criticism aimed at Vreeland - and the Yves Saint Laurent exhibition in particular – has been tremendously damning. Many curators remain cautious and many critics remain suspicious of the designer retrospective in light of Vreeland's work[35]. Deborah Silverman's *Selling Culture: Bloomingdale's, Diana Vreeland, and the New Aristocracy of Taste in Reagan's America* (1986), remains the text that any author discussing Vreeland's position at the Costume Institute (whether praising or damning) cites. Silverman's book is relentless in its criticism of Vreeland's fashion exhibitions, aligning them with the ethos of right-wing US President Ronald Reagan, and seeing them as promoting opulence in its most negative form. Silverman states

> While Mrs. Vreeland's practice of being what she calls being 'terrible on facts,' of 'always exaggerating,' shaped her years of success as a bold and imaginative fashion magazine editor, her exercise of opulent fantasies as art museum historical exhibits is distressing and inappropriate (1986:xi).

[35] Arguably certain prominent contemporary curators such as Judith Clark, Olivier Saillard and Andrew Bolton have not been inhibited by Vreeland's reception; however, the impact of continuous attacks on Vreeland's work has meant that she has remained a constant feature – almost a cautionary tale – within fashion curatorial discourse.

Surprisingly, despite its dated appraisal of the commodification of the museum environment, Silverman's book continues to be used as ammunition (just as Diana Vreeland remains a continuing negative example) against fashion exhibitions. In *The Curator's Egg* (2009), Karsten Schubert praises Silverman's position, using her text as a shining example of why fashion should be excluded from the museum. Discussing Vreeland, Schubert says, "her exhibitions were little more than glorified window displays and thinly disguised marketing opportunities for the fashion industry, conspicuously lacking all scholarly insight and purpose" (2009:73).

The prolonged attack on Vreeland means that other curators are cautious of repeating the same mistakes. However, Vreeland's legacy is simply too important to ignore, and much of her innovation is now being appreciated. Stevenson argues that, "Debra Silverman condemns Vreeland as a ruthless wrecker of history. But the fact that Vreeland's work is still so ardently discussed testifies that she also made history," and "her legacy is such that by unashamedly staging shows that were open to so much criticism she practically forced a dialogue of what was expected of fashion curation" (Stevenson, 2008:224). Stevenson is not alone in her reappraisal of Vreeland's exhibitions. Valerie Steele also highlights the positive elements to be gleaned from Vreeland, saying, "Despite their manifold faults, Vreeland's exhibitions succeeded in abolishing the aura of antiquarianism that had previously surrounded most costume displays" and "Nor should Vreeland's emphasis on fashionable spectacle simply be dismissed, for it potentially plays a crucial role in conveying the experience of fashion" (2008:12).

Steele's final point is particularly relevant. While discussion regarding the commercial nature of fashion exhibitions continues, from a curatorial perspective it is important to acknowledge the number of sites outside of the museum in which fashion is displayed (as explored in Chapter Two). Until Cecil Beaton's exhibition at the V&A, and Diana Vreeland took up her position at the Costume Institute, fashion museum displays had ignored fashion as it functions in the outside world: as part of a person's everyday wardrobe, as a process of design, spectacular window display, a carefully selected range in a department store or boutique, or as a constantly changing phenomenon walking the international runways.

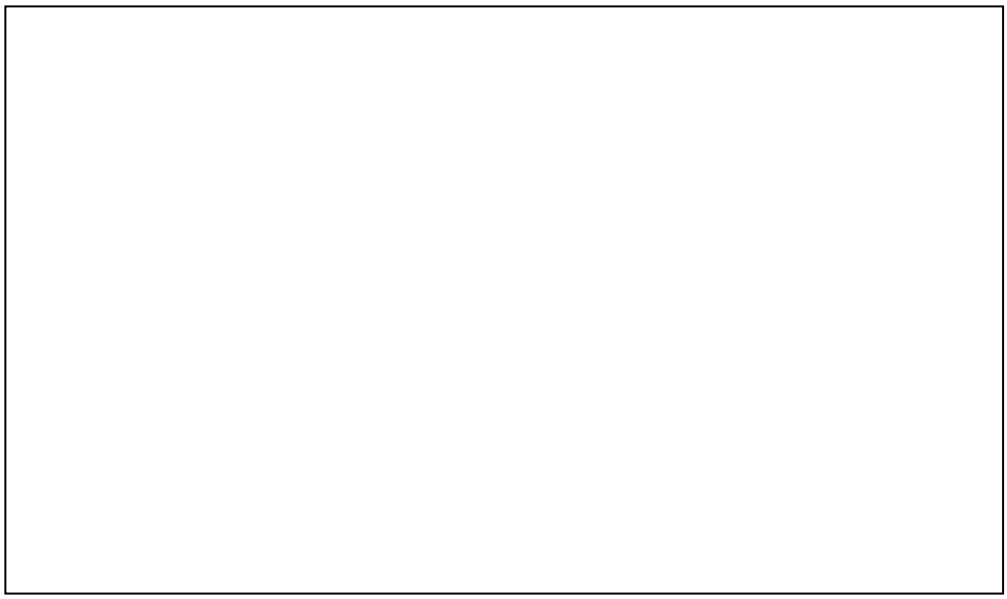

Figure 30. Vreeland (with model Marisa Berenson) and the Schlaeppi mannequins

For Beaton's show a window designer (Michael Haynes) was hired to design the exhibition, and for Vreeland the 'look' of the exhibition was very important to her work with the Costume Institute. Rather than formal exhibition design, Vreeland's emphasis on the look was more about styling, that she likely transported from her years working with magazines. Concern for the appearance of her exhibitions was a key component of Vreeland's approach. For instance, she sourced abstract Schlappi mannequins in Zurich (figure 29), wanting to set the look of her exhibitions apart from the current trend (in both costume exhibitions and retail environments) towards realistic mannequins that "are rather creepy and unattractive and distract from the look of the dress" (Vreeland in Dwight, 2002: 204). To these mannequins she added swathes of fabric or stockings; wrapping the heads and creating an effect like colourful masks. Vreeland also viewed colour as a fundamental element of her exhibition installations. Judith Clark states, "colour, in all its infinite shades, was very important to Vreeland. The power of one colour to show off another. She colour blocked her shows as a graphic designer might block double-page spreads" (in Immordino Vreeland, 2011: 238).

In recent years there has been a re-appraisal of Vreeland's work, particularly within fashion curatorial discourse. Most theorists agree that while ostentatious and problematic, Vreeland's work at the Costume Institute has also been highly influential. Lisa Immordino Vreeland recently published *Diana Vreeland: The Eye has*

to Travel, detailing Vreeland's work across her magazine years and into the Costume Institute. Judith Clark's chapter about the latter challenges a lot of the criticisms of Vreeland by balancing them with her contribution to the field. Clark argues

> It was her eccentric attitude that has been criticised as creating unnecessary artifice, but her calculated distortion and corruption of history was perhaps her most profound statement within curatorial practice. She was asking something new of curating. She was asking how far a story could be delegated to the set, and how many characteristics can be invested in a silhouette. She made writing the story out on a caption (a more traditional approach) seem like a terrible defeat… The legacy that Diana Vreeland left behind at the Met Costume Institute is just as profound as her mark on editorial flair, though it is much more contentious (2011: 239-40)[36]

Clark's point highlights Vreeland's departures away from traditional fashion exhibition approaches in her partnership with the Costume Institute. Her innovative 'distortions and corruptions' of history can also be re-assessed by looking at Vreeland's work through the lens of the adjunct curator. Indeed, in the conception of this curatorial model, Graham and Cooke stress the potential for working adjunctly to produce new working methods within institutions (2010:151). Perhaps if Vreeland had worked independently from such a large institution, the criticisms of her exhibitions at the Met might not have been so harsh. However, positioning Vreeland as a part of the museum (as akin to an institutional curator or member of staff) also misses some of the complexities inherent in her working conditions. Like Beaton, Vreeland worked in conjunction with, but also as separate from the institution, as evidenced by her title 'Special Consultant.'

Beaton and Vreeland's legacy thus represents the convergence of two worlds: inside and outside the museum, and two curatorial models: the institutional and independent. Their body of work and their collaboration with large institutions acts out the model of the adjunct fashion curator in very specific ways. In both of their cases Beaton and Vreeland were able to introduce a new collection focus to their respective institutions. While costume and textiles had existed in the permanent collections of the V&A and The Metropolitan Museum of Art prior to Beaton and Vreeland's involvement, the concept of introducing and displaying contemporary fashion, and individual fashion designers, was a radical departure. Viewing this

[36] Alongside this book and a documentary of the same name, Judith Clark and Maria Luisa Frisa curated an exhibition that deals with Vreeland's legacy and impact on curatorial approaches, titled *Diana Vreeland After Diana Vreeland* and held at the Fortuny Museum from March until June 2012.

radical change through the lens of the adjunct fashion curator provides new insights into their work. Specifically, their emphasis on design, styling and conveying fashion trends signals the introduction of sites from the 'outside world' of fashion into the museum. This is a particular strength of occupying an adjunct position as a fashion curator, where incorporating concepts, tropes and display tactics from sites outside of the museum is a key factor in defining the adjunct approach. The adjunct curatorial approach is explored in greater depth through the lens of my own practice in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Creative Practice Review

This chapter addresses the trajectory of my creative practice as an emerging adjunct fashion curator. It analyses the over-riding themes within my work, alongside a discussion of the sites that my curatorial practice has engaged with. The role of collaboration with private collections, collectors and individuals is examined. Furthermore, this chapter explores the working conditions of the adjunct fashion curator through a close reading of the exhibitions curated during my candidature.

Chapters Two and Three introduced the concept of the adjunct fashion curator and related this concept to theories and histories of fashion curation. Specifically, the adjunct fashion curator was positioned in relation to a broader reading of the curator's role. Also examined was the impact of site on the development of fashion curation. In this chapter I will explore the implications of an adjunct working model in greater depth and in relation to my own practice. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the model of the adjunct curator appropriated by this project is drawn from Graham and Cooke's description of the adjunct art curator in *Rethinking Curating* (2010: 151). Alongside institutional and independent curating, adjunct curating provides a third model for curatorial practice. Combining both institutional and independent approaches, the adjunct curator works as a freelance curator in conjunction with institutions. This research project utilises this model, introducing it to expand on dominant fashion curatorial models that emphasise only institutional and independent approaches. This chapter aims to further examine the profile of the adjunct fashion curator through an analysis of my own work. It does not seek to suggest that my practice alone embodies, exemplifies or defines the adjunct fashion curatorial model, but uses it as a framework for describing the project's curatorial approach.

Before proceeding to examine my curatorial projects and strategies more closely I will briefly revisit some key concepts raised in Chapter One. As established in Chapter One, my creative and theoretical research project is not concerned with the

fashion industry or designer garments. Nevertheless, I have mindfully located my practice within the field of 'fashion curation'. While it is true that the generalised and neutral terms of 'clothing' or 'dress' curation may also appropriately describe my practice (as addressed and defined in Chapter One), no single term adequately defines the range of practices that are represented under the banner of 'fashion curating.' While 'fashion' connotes an industry of rapid clothing production, the translation of elements of that industry into exhibited formats and environments is inherently contradictory. Once fashionable garments enter the museum they are removed from the key systems of fashion. In contrast to the fashion system, which involves rapid change and circulation, the museum is concerned with longevity and preservation. My use of the term 'fashion curation' acknowledges this contradiction, but suggests that the adjunct fashion curator provides a possible avenue for addressing these contradictions by simultaneously occupying a position that is both independent and institutional; both inside and outside the museum.

The use of the term 'adjunct fashion curator' to describe my practice allows me to better articulate my position and interests as a curator. My exhibitions have been primarily concerned with understanding clothing as a vehicle for story-telling. Specifically, my curatorial practice has been dedicated to exploring embedded biographies within clothing. In exploring this interest, I have pursued two curatorial strategies. The first is concerned with materiality; namely how curatorial approaches can respond to the tactility of vintage and antique garments to elevate the biographical stories embedded in clothing. Secondly, collaboration - with private collections, collectors, dress-makers - has allowed me to engage with and exhibit garments in institutions without collections of fashion and dress, while simultaneously exploring the personal stories around those collections. Working adjunctly within a range of institutional sites has enabled me to introduce private fashion collections, source lost or discarded collections, and also pioneer smaller projects with independent fashion designers. I have consistently worked with a number of collaborators, including institutions (the QUT Art Museum and the State Library of Queensland), private collections (the Jean Brown Archive, The Darnell Collection), collectors (Amber Long, Charlotte Smith) and individuals (Paula Dunlop).

My work has explored the relationship between fashion display and specific institutional sites through collaboration and engagement with a range of

environments. My work has also examined the role of the fashion curator by personally developing and refining the adjunct fashion curator's role in my practice. As such, my work proposes a different working method to bypass or extend the current dominant fashion curatorial roles. Furthermore, I argue that my adjunct position has allowed me to explore my curatorial interests in a variety of ways.

In Chapter One I outlined my interpretive position as a researcher, locating my work within a broadly feminist framework informed by 'parafeminism' and in relation to the connection between fashion and feminism. Women's relationships and telling women's stories in relation to clothing are dominant themes that manifest in the creative project's collaborative methods and in the content and design of the resulting exhibitions. In Chapter One I also argued that the term adjunct—with its implicit suggestion of a tangential or auxiliary position to an established thing—is ideally suited to fashion curation. Fashion has often been marginalised within institutional hierarchies. This thesis has also raised a similar argument in relation to gender, and the sidelining of women within institutions (alongside the fact that many early fashion and costume curators were indeed women). Connecting these two marginalised elements—women and fashion—my adjunct curatorial practice seeks to address and rebalance what is valued within institutional sites. I will discuss this further in relation to specific curatorial projects in this chapter.

The collaborative processes at the heart of my practice contest the dominance of individual authorship that is frequently emphasised in curatorial discourse. In the literature that explores the approaches of notable individual curators, such as Judith Clark and Harald Szeemann, the notion of distinctive authorship is often emphasised through the detailing of idiosyncratic curatorial approaches. Consequently, the curator's subjectivity is given prominence. The notion of curator-as-artist or 'exhibition-maker'—as Szeemann proposed—place 'creative freedom' or curatorial authorship as the central concerns and core values of the independent curator[37]. This chapter will trace how, as an adjunct fashion curator, my work has been informed more by notions of intersubjectivity than notions of curatorial authorship. The creative project is realised as the result of ongoing

[37] These characteristics may also be attributed to some institutional curators, but tend to be more dominant in independent curating.

dialogues with consistent collaborators, and as such, I relate my process more as interlocutor than author.

Rather than contributing another 'curator-as' type, I am instead attempting to articulate a potential position outside of the seemingly inescapable binaries within curatorial discourse, particularly in regards to independent curating. These binaries are: critique versus complicity; education versus entertainment; independent versus institutional; alternative versus traditional; artist versus curator; and (particularly in fashion curation) fashion versus art and living versus dead. I am aware of these arguments, but being aware of them does not necessarily mean 'choosing a side.' Rather than getting caught up in taking a position within these prescribed binary models, I have sought to get beyond them through a pragmatic approach that has been specific to my own situation working in conjunction with institutions, private collections and individuals.

The projects included in this discussion are:

2009 –

- *Modern Times - Modern Handbags*, Jean Brown Archive/State Library QLD (curator)
- *Wearer/Maker/Wearer: recent work by Paula Dunlop*, QUT Art Museum (curator)
- *Imeldific! 20th Century Shoe Design*, Jean Brown Gallery (co-curator)

2010 –

- *Material Memories: restaging the eCHO project*, QUT Art Museum (curator)
- *The Curated Spectacle*, Photographic series and blog (ongoing)

2011 –

- *Dreaming of Chanel*, QUT Art Museum (curator)

While it is common to produce a final project (exhibition, performance etc.) in practice-led research, I am here presenting a broader body of work that has been produced across the entirety of my candidature. Each of these projects will be detailed and reflected upon to reveal the themes and processes of my adjunct curatorial practice.

2009

Modern Times – Modern Handbags[38]

The Jean Brown Archive and the State Library of Queensland
8th August - 8th November 2009

This first exhibition was undertaken early in my candidature and established a pattern of working adjunctly with institutions to introduce private collectors. It united a private archive of handbags owned by a high-end retail boutique, Jean Brown, with a large public institution, The State Library of Queensland.

Throughout the project I have maintained an ongoing collaboration with the Jean Brown Archive; a private collection of handbags that is exhibited in Jean Brown, a concept store located in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. The store sells high-end fashion accessories to Australian consumers at the same time that northern hemisphere retailers receive them, rather than at the delayed pace customary in Australian retail. Director Amber Long calls the store, "Australia's boutique version of the world's leading luxury department stores" (2011). The Jean Brown Archive is believed to be one of the largest private handbag collections in the world, and contains pieces dating back to the 16th century. The history of department stores as exhibition spaces, mostly for art and design, was explored in Chapter Two. In Australia, stores such as Myer, David Jones and Georges contained art galleries, and also featured fashion displays and exhibitions. This tradition is taken up in a contemporary context by concept stores, such as Colette in Paris, that contain contemporary art galleries. However, while there is a tradition of displaying art in stores, the idea of exhibiting fashion (a collection or archive) alongside fashion (new, designer items for sale) remains rare. At the same time, Amber Long is both 'director' and 'curator' of Jean Brown. Rather than have a separate exhibition space, Long integrates exhibitions of the archive into the store's environment.

My involvement with the Jean Brown store and Archive resulted in two exhibition projects, *Modern Times - Modern Handbags* (2009) and *Imeldific! 20th Century Shoe Design* (2010). These projects came about due to my interest in the Jean Brown Archive, which I had heard about early in my candidature. I contacted Long in

[38] Refer to Appendix A for further details about this exhibition

early 2009 and set-up a meeting to discuss my project and her concept for Jean Brown as a gallery and store. My collaboration with Long began immediately after this meeting through an invitation to utilise the Jean Brown Archive in an exhibition at the State Library of Queensland, *Modern Times*.

Modern Times was a large travelling exhibition on Australian Modernism from the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney scheduled for the State Library of Queensland (SLQ) in August 2009[39]. Part of the Brisbane season of this exhibition was a small fashion display located in the reference library at SLQ. Long had suggested that I oversee this aspect of the project after our meeting. While the Jean Brown Archive is almost constantly on show in the store, its viewing public is much smaller than a large public institution such as the State Library of Queensland, located in the cultural precinct on the Brisbane River.

I was thus developing an adjunct position in this project. This working method subverted the dominance of both independent and institutional curatorial models by negotiating a version of both positions. I acted as an intermediary between a private collection and an institution by working adjunctly. My role was as a conduit, providing the institution access to the collection, while integrating the collection in a way that adhered to the institution's protocols and conceptual direction for the exhibition.

Working adjunctly involved a range of negotiations between two sites: a store and library. The Jean Brown Archive is displayed in store in a consistent way. This display uses certain sections of the store, and is generally tied in to fit with a particular trend or theme relating to new season stock. By contrast, the library display emphasised historical connections, a specific period of time in Australia and was positioned in relation to the library's collection. Working in conjunction with the library to exhibit the private Jean Brown collection thus set up a pattern of collaboration that would continue throughout the candidature. The adjunct position established by this project allowed me the flexibility to access private collections. This was coupled with the advantages of working in an institutional environment: the potential for a large public audience, security for the collection, institutional resources and permanent staff.

[39] The translation of the exhibition in to SLQ's gallery space was managed by art consultants Alison Kubler and Louise Martin-Chew.

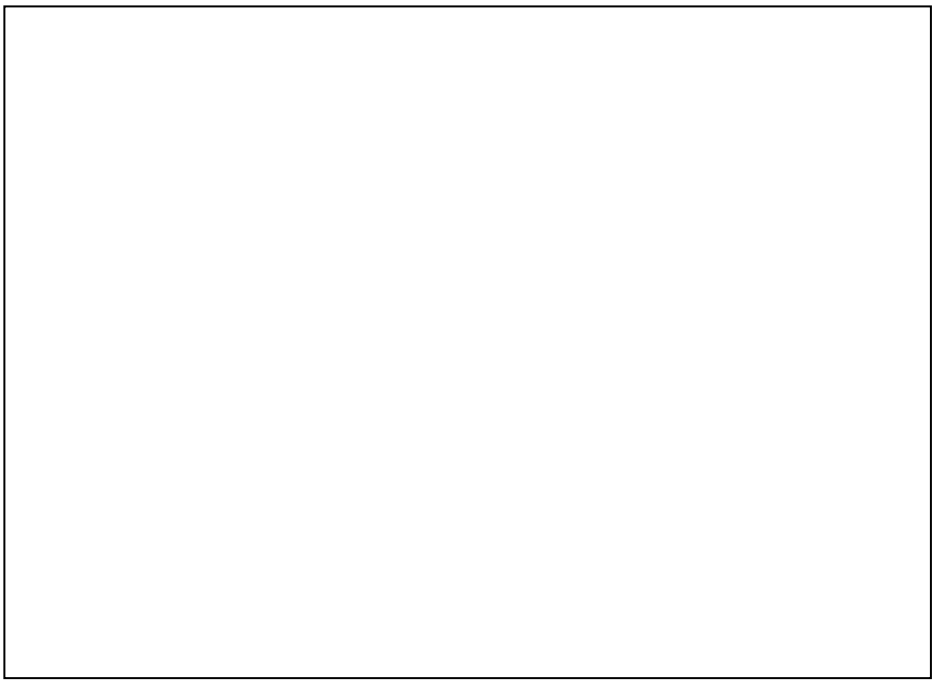

Figure 31. Aviatrix Jean Batten, 1934, State Library of Queensland.

This exhibition set-up a working pattern that I would continue to develop throughout my candidature. It also laid the foundation for what would become my consistent curatorial interests. In beginning the process of engaging with the archive, I initially viewed the handbag collection through digital images. Looking closely at the details of the bags a number of themes began to emerge. Many of the images showed bags with visible traces of wear, while others seemed pristine; perhaps only used a handful of times. I did not know who had owned these pieces (the provenance of the majority of items in the Jean Brown Archive is unknown), but started to imagine various types of women from different eras wearing the handbags.

This 'imagining', while based broadly in historic terms—informed by my knowledge of fashion history, (silhouettes from different eras; historic events and their impact on fashion etc.)—also allowed me a level of freedom as a curator that I felt would not have been possible had I not been working with a private collection. Implicit in the role of an institutional curator is the care of objects, including extensive and rigorous research into the history, origins, and provenance of the museum collection. Operating outside of those constraints, I sought to situate the items through a personal lens (as worn items whose wearer I imagined). Thus

establishing a highly speculative narrative, or telling a story, became my way of contextualising the objects in the library environment.

By exploring SLQ's image archive and trawling for photographs of women fitting the time-frame of the *Modern Times* exhibition, I amassed a collection of images for use in the handbags exhibition (figures 30 & 31). The display technique of juxtaposing images with garments or accessories was frequently utilised by Diana Vreeland in her exhibitions at the Met in order to give depth or wider contexts (such as the relationship between painting and fashion) to garments. At the same time, the process of juxtaposing photographs with the handbags allowed me to integrate a public and private collection, and situate the handbags in the somewhat foreign environment of the public space of the library[40]. It also gave me the opportunity to contextualise the handbags as worn items and as gendered items because the photographs conjured the female identities (the 'modern women') that would have used such bags.

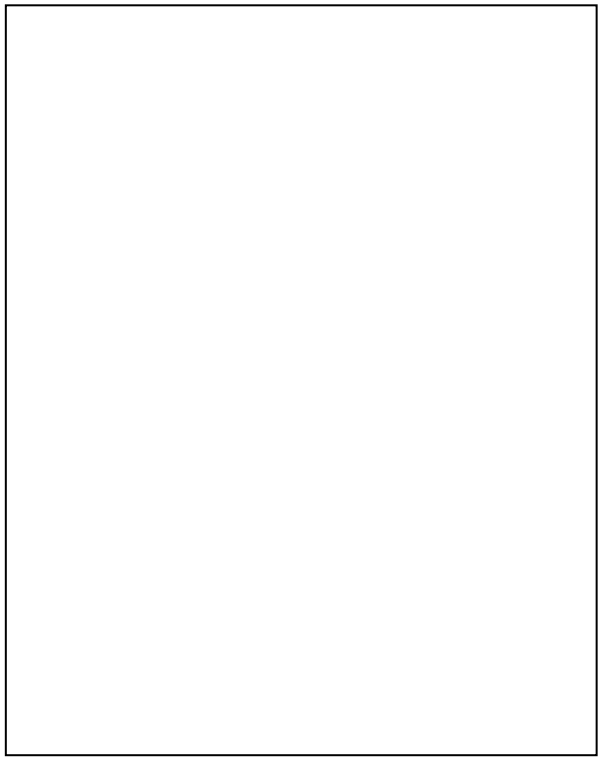

Figure 32. Woman on a boat, 1930s, State Library of Queensland

[40] While there are textiles in the library's collection, these are not on public view and have not been displayed in the highly accessible space of the reference library.

'The modern woman' – an often imagined character in the history of fashion (see Banner, 1983; Wilson, 1985) – was a key figure in the exhibition. The photographs I selected contained images of women who seemed to embody this ideal: women with short hair, wearing trousers on a sailing boat; women in their work attire, suit, hat, gloves and clutch handbag; women in motion, dancing (figure 31). The figure of the modern woman thus provided a narrative thread that linked the images and handbags, and consequently the library and archive. By introducing photographs of women who seemed to exemplify this archetype, I deliberately exploited the mythology around 'the modern woman' to conjure a biographical or personal element to the exhibition that was achieved through the coalescence of the Jean Brown Archive and the State Library photographic collection. Furthermore, without the photographs of the 'modern women', the handbags themselves lacked a tangible quality. Displayed behind glass, their previous lives as owned and worn objects, and the potential stories they contained, seemed vastly inaccessible. This juxtaposition attempted to evoke a series of biographies or phantom identities in order to imbue the objects with a haptic quality as tactile objects that were touched and worn.

The *Modern Times-Modern Handbags* exhibition thus introduced the central over-riding theme within my curatorial practice, which has centred on telling stories through clothing. It also established a pattern of working between a private collection and a public institution. Thus the exhibition set-up a working model that I continued to employ: the adjunct fashion curator.

The exhibition of 19 handbags and 15 photographs opened on the 8th of August and remained open until November 2009 (figures 32-35).

Figure 33. Installation view, *Modern Times – Modern Handbags*, SLQ, 2009. Photograph by Nadia Buick.

Figure 34. Installation view, *Modern Times – Modern Handbags*, SLQ, 2009. Photograph by Nadia Buick.

Figure 35. Installation view, *Modern Times – Modern Handbags*, SLQ, 2009. Photograph by Nadia Buick.

Figure 36. Installation view, *Modern Times – Modern Handbags*, SLQ, 2009. Photograph by Nadia Buick.

wearer/maker/wearer: recent work by Paula Dunlop[41]

QUT Art Museum, 18th August – 13th September 2009

After establishing a method of collaborating adjunctly with institutions and private collections/ors on *Modern Times*, I sought out another institutional partner for a series of exhibitions. While the library partnership had been successful, its exhibition programming was already scheduled several years in advance. I approached the QUT Art Museum, an institution without a permanent fashion collection, for a potential alliance, and began working with them from mid 2009. The first project I curated in conjunction with the museum was an exhibition of the work of Paula Dunlop, a Brisbane-based dress-maker and a postgraduate colleague. I continued to work in association with the QUT Art Museum on two more projects, *Material Memories: restaging the eCHO project*, and *Dreaming of Chanel.*

Due to its position within a university context, the QUT Art Museum often features the work of emerging artists. However, these are generally drawn from a fine-arts background. Introducing the work of a fashion design practitioner such as Dunlop thus extended the museum's standard approach. Acting adjunctly again presented a level of freedom to pursue my curatorial interests. It facilitated the introduction of fashion curation into a fine-arts environment. At face-value, working with Dunlop on her solo-exhibition did not seem to fit neatly with my over-riding interest in exploring the potential of vintage and antique items as carriers of intimate stories. At the same time, I did not want to pursue dominant fashion curatorial models that often curate exhibitions around a singular designer. However, Dunlop's reimagining of vintage garments added an important complementary dimension to my exploration of the way pre-worn garments carry and tell intimate stories, particularly about the lives of women.

Dunlop's practice examines pre-conceived modes of 'making' and 'designing' inherent to the fashion industry. She seeks alternative processes that explore the role of the dress-maker, chance and improvisation, along

[41] Refer to Appendix B for further details about this exhibition

with a fierce interest in ethics, sustainable materials and approaches. A large part of Dunlop's practice is making things for friends and family, using chance-driven pattern making, or through re-working existing garments. These are 'gifted', and this act forms an important part of her work. The use of pre-existing garments to create 'new' pieces that are given to close friends and family introduced a different conception of clothing as vehicles for personal stories. In Dunlop's work there seemed to be an intimate relationship between herself (the maker) and her recipient (the wearer). This became the key focus of the exhibition. I proposed the title 'The wearer and the maker', which Dunlop altered to become *'wearer/maker/wearer'*.

The curatorial process for this exhibition was highly collaborative. I regularly consulted with the museum's curators, informing them of the exhibition's progress and direction. This was frequently a process of negotiation as I strove to integrate new concepts surrounding the inclusion of fashion into the museum. This included developing display techniques that had not been used in the museum before in order to effectively display the garments. At the same time, I worked closely with Dunlop in what became a close partnership. Central to this was the fact that the exhibition project remained constantly 'in progress'. The clothing was being made up until roughly one month before the opening date. I was also personally involved in the work: Dunlop made a garment for me that was included in the exhibition.

As a recipient or 'wearer' of one of the exhibited garments, my own story became a part of the biographical narrative within the items of clothing. The garment Paula made for me had been altered from a vintage Dries Van Noten skirt that I had found in an op-shop. And as I had become a part of the exhibited work, Dunlop was very involved in the exhibition process. Central to her practice is a questioning of the 'plan' within fashion design practice. Through working closely together, this approach infiltrated the curatorial process too. I didn't have a final checklist of garments, and as such couldn't decide where and how the garments were going to be placed in the gallery space. Dunlop and I worked on this process and modified things as we installed the show, which was possible due to the small

allocation of the museum we had to work with. Known as the Tom Heath Gallery, this space is made up of one square room, a window box and two hallways. In the end, the show contained 9 garments and 8 photographs.

As opposed to the handbags exhibition at the State Library, where display elements such as cabinets were imposed by the conventions of the space, Dunlop's show enabled the exploration of a variety of different display techniques. The desire to evoke home-dressmaking, domestic rather than flashy or polished, was central to the display. One way to structure the display of the show was to place the garments on mannequins beside the large-scale photographic images that were part of the body of work[42]. Through open discussions around how to structure the exhibition space, Dunlop and I both felt that this approach didn't fit with the underlying concepts of her work, which explored chance, rejected teleological models of design and rejected the autonomy of a single designer 'creator'. At the same time, through the development of my adjunct curatorial practice, I embraced collaboration and negotiated subjectivities, rather than privileging the curator as a single creative force. Occupying an adjunct position enabled this process to be explored through a level of independence from institutional constraints around conventional display practices, art-forms and time-frames.

Despite working in a museum environment, acting as an adjunct fashion curator remains distinct from an institutional curatorial role, where following museum conventions is paramount. One example of this difference can be seen in the labelling for *wearer/maker/wearer*. Rather than having standard museum labels and didactics printed and made for the show, I thought that writing directly onto the walls of the museum, using both mine and Dunlop's handwriting, would disrupt the standard art museum approach to 'tombstone' labels and didactic panels[43]. This approach also communicated our collaboration. Again, having a level of independence from the institution allowed these museum conventions to be tested and altered. The presence of formal labels can give a feeling of

[42] These were taken by Paula's brother, Damian Dunlop, in another collaborative partnership.
[43] Tombstone labels are "museum jargon for those labels bearing a work of art's vital statistics—artist, title, date, medium, collection" (Schaffner, 2006: 162).

'authentication' to an exhibition and the objects it displays, which in this instance felt highly incongruous with Dunlop's work which expresses a sense of informality and intimacy. Thus, writing on the walls seemed to me a playful and unexpected way to alter the museum space.

Other display elements were introduced that did not adhere to institutional models, for instance, no frames were used for the photographs. These were instead attached to the walls with dressmaker's pins, and wooden coat-hangers and pins were also used to hang some garments flat against the wall. These elements aimed to communicate the environment of the dress-maker's studio. Rather than a series of didactics throughout the show I chose to have one body of text in the first room; an approach that I continued to use in future shows utilising the Tom Heath Gallery. This was deliberate, so as not to break-up the viewer's movement through the exhibition with many labels. My didactic panel read as follows:

> The fashion industry is characterised by mass production and rapid change. Designers are celebrated as creative visionaries whose collections are coveted and copied worldwide.
>
> A different history of design exists, however, through the home-made and re-made garments located within the everyday, domestic sphere. This is a predominantly feminine domain and its existence can be traced throughout specific historical periods, such as the 'make do and mend' campaign of the Second World War.
>
> Re-making is thus a significant aspect of fashion history that disrupts neat definitions of design in which a sole author is privileged, and where a constant strive for the 'new' is questioned. The everyday making of clothing is often overlooked in both popular culture and fashion discourse, but it is this form of 'fashion at the margins' that inspires Paula Dunlop's practice.
>
> Making one-off pieces for a specific recipient, often by re-working existing vintage pieces, Dunlop's practice explores the relationship between the maker and the wearer in a way often neglected by the fashion industry. The images and garments contained in this exhibition highlight a collaboration between Dunlop and a chosen recipient (a close friend or family member) who each garment was made for. By 'handing-over' each garment to a specific person, Dunlop places as much emphasis on the gesture as on the garment itself. These items are literally given a new life, and to demonstrate this, each recipient was photographed wearing their garment. The photographs represent the inherent importance of the wearer within fashion; without a living body the garment is a lifeless object. As such, these images are prefaced in the exhibition layout.
>
> Furthermore, clothes are signifiers of identity, a kind of self-portrait in themselves. In this equation, the revered design object becomes a part of the everyday life of the wearer, whose identity is considered throughout the

> process of making. All of this disrupts the impulses of 'originality' and 'newness' that supposedly define fashion; in Dunlop's practice the temporary becomes treasured (Buick, 2009).

The didactic text represents a large aspect of my curatorial role in the project and highlights the stories that the exhibition attempts to tell. These stories are centred around fashion and dress-making (i.e. fashion is not only produced by autonomous designers); instances of women's personal approaches to dress-making, such as re-making older garments; Paula's story as a dress-maker, and the stories of her recipients. Thus, as in the handbags exhibition, the written word forms a significant element of my curatorial process as a conveyor of narrative.

wearer/maker/wearer was the first in a series of three fashion exhibitions I curated at the QUT Art Museum (figure 36 – 39). As discussed here, these exhibitions enabled significant changes to the institution's standard curatorial approaches and methodologies. This point will be explored further in relation to the two other fashion exhibition projects curated in conjunction with the museum in 2010 and 2011. The exhibition ran from the 19th August – 13th September 2009.

Figure 37. *wearer/maker/wearer*, QUT Art Museum, 2009. Photograph by Damian Dunlop.

Figure 38. ***wearer/maker/wearer*****, QUT Art Museum, 2009. Photograph by Damian Dunlop**

Figure 39. ***wearer/maker/wearer*****, QUT Art Museum, 2009. Photograph by Damian Dunlop**

Figure 40. Carla Binotto photographed by Damian Dunlop for *wearer/maker/wearer*, 2009.

Imeldific! 20th Century Shoe Design[44]

Jean Brown Gallery, 28th October – 29th November 2009

In early September Amber Long contacted me with a concept for an exhibition to be staged at the Jean Brown Gallery in October and November 2009. The idea was to collaborate with an Australian fashion blogger on an exhibition and window display. This exhibition took as its starting point the occurrence of a number of 'blogger windows' which had recently been cropping up in overseas boutiques and department stores. In these cases a 'blogger window' was either a collaboration between a particular fashion blogger and a store – whereby the blogger worked with the store to create a window display around their blog's persona – or it was

[44] Refer to Appendix C for further details about this exhibition

a window produced by a store's design department that was inspired by, but not directly involving, a particular blog[45]. Taking this as its inspiration, the Jean Brown version of this collaboration would work directly with a fashion blogger on a window display, while also including an exhibition, thus extending the concept beyond windows and into the store itself. The blogger selected for this collaboration was Sydney-based Matt Jordan, known as 'Imelda the Despotic Queens of Shoes.' 'Imelda' is an internationally acclaimed blog about contemporary shoe design in which Jordan satirically assumed the persona of noted shoe addict, Imelda Marcos.

My role in this project would be as a co-curator, focussing on research, acquiring objects and assisting with the exhibition design and lay-out. Like all the exhibitions in the Jean Brown space, *Imeldific!* sat beside current season stock, including high-end shoes, handbags and accessories that were for sale. The exhibition items weren't dispersed among the stock, but they were literally placed side-by side in an adjacent cabinet or shelf. Even though the exhibition items were displayed in essentially the same way as the other items in the store, I was amazed that the majority of people interacting with the store space implicitly understood that some were 'up for grabs' and others weren't (with assistance from the labelling). Certainly this could be said to be obvious with antique pieces, but with shoes from the 1980s onwards, things were less clear. However, people read the invisible line between exhibition space and store with relative ease. Inversely, I noticed in my museum shows that it seemed to be impossible for audiences *not* to touch fashion.

In previous chapters I have raised some of the criticisms surrounding fashion in the museum, which often emphasises the lack of tactility as a result of exhibiting fashion (Wilson, 1994, Palmer, 2008). My own interest in clothing is due to its power to communicate intimate stories. I have noticed that viewers of my museum exhibitions have been particularly drawn to reaching out and touching objects. For instance, the *eCHO* and

[45] Canadian department store Holt Renfrew created windows 'inspired by' blogger's such as Bryanboy, Sea of Shoes and the Sartorialist, in June of 2009. Scott Schumann of the Sartorialist designed windows for Barney's department store in September 2009.

Dreaming of Chanel exhibitions, discussed later, are predominantly concerned with the biography of clothing. The garments in *Dreaming of Chanel*, in particular, were constantly being touched during the exhibition. Given the personal nature of the stories attached to these garments, the need to touch may be connected to a sense of memory associated with tactility, which frequently arose in discussion with audience members during my curator's tours of these exhibitions. In the store environment of Jean Brown, intimacy with an object is achieved through the purchase. Given that the shoes exhibited in *Imeldific!* were not purchasable items, perhaps their tactile appeal is transferred to items that *can* be bought and taken home to wear.

While the Jean Brown Archive is a private collection outside of a museum environment, my curatorial work with the Archive in this instance actually incorporated museum principles such as scholarship and acquisition. While Amber Long refers to herself as a curator, the approach she takes is very different to this museum approach. Long's Archive is a private collection that allows a level of freedom due to her ownership of it. As mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, my own work has been about utilising other's collections, predominantly in the museum space. Working in the store environment disrupted this, perhaps even inverting the adjunct curatorial role present in my exhibitions with the QUT Art Museum. In those instances I gave the museum 'outside' access to fashion collections and introduced my own exhibitions into the institutional environment. While in this collaboration with Jean Brown I acted in a more institutional role. I was in a sense invited to give a form of curatorial legitimacy to the store environment through enacting traditional institutional tasks such as research, education and acquisition. As a result, the themes that I have explored in my other exhibitions around personal stories and women were less present in this project, where my role was more restricted. Consequently, on my next project, I returned to working in conjunction with the QUT Art Museum and explored these themes in the most direct way to date (figure 40-43).

Imeldific! ran from 28th October – 29th November 2009.

Figure 41. *Imeldific! 20th Century Shoe Design.*

Figure 42. *Imeldific! 20th Century Shoe Design.*

Figure 43. *Imeldific! 20th Century Shoe Design.*

Figure 44. *Imeldific! 20th Century Shoe Design.*

2010

Material Memories: restaging the eCHO project[46]
QUT Art Museum, 13th July – 22nd August, 2010

My second exhibition in The Tom Heath Gallery at QUT Art Museum had a substantial back-story. It grew out of a project that I stumbled across early in my candidature which had been developed by the QUT fashion department in 2003, titled *eCHO*. I discovered *eCHO* while in my first weeks at QUT Art Museum, while going through the records of their previous (and only) fashion related exhibition, titled *Architects of Glamour + Masters of Style* (2003). This exhibition showcased 20th century fashion photography through the work of iconic photographers such as Cecil Beaton, Horst P. Horst and Irving Penn. After doing some research I discovered that this exhibition was held in connection with a fashion conference called 'Making an Appearance' held at the University of Queensland (UQ) in association with QUT. At that time noted Australian fashion historian Margaret Maynard was still lecturing in fashion history at UQ (she has since retired), and she was the driving force behind the conference. Guests included well-known international fashion theorists Valerie Steele, Christopher Breward and Elizabeth Wilson.

Architects of Glamour + Masters of Style was listed on the conference program, along with *eCHO*; a performance and installation co-ordinated by Professor Suzi Vaughan, Head of Fashion at QUT. I had little information at hand to decipher what *eCHO* was, but I decided to contact Prof. Vaughan to find out more. It was, in fact, a very large project. It united a collection of disused clothing from the mid-to-late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries donated by the National Trust to QUT. The clothes were deemed 'insignificant' by the National Trust due to their extensive damage, lost histories and lack of identifiable designers or dress-makers. The clothes were given to QUT with the idea of research or inspiration for the burgeoning cohort of fashion design students. Prof. Vaughan and her colleague Wendy Armstrong decided to turn this into a larger production.

[46] Refer to Appendix D for further details about this exhibition

They invited international design schools as well as well-known national designers to rework the existing garments into something new; or to create an entirely new garment using the old piece as an inspiration. The QUT fashion design students also created garments. All of this became a live performance at Old Government House (located on the QUT Gardens Point campus) during the 'Making an Appearance' conference. Some of the clothes and objects remained on display for a week following this and were then dispersed[47].

It seemed that the 'moment' had passed for *eCHO* in the eyes of those who had originally taken part in it, but for me it held a sense of fascination and a desire to know more about the stories of the garments. I contacted Prof. Vaughan in early July 2009, and I mentioned my exhibition slot at the QUT Art Museum in July 2010. I raised the possibility of revisiting the *eCHO* project in this context. Prof. Vaughan stated that she was happy for me to go forward with revisiting and interpreting the project in the context of an exhibition. I met with Prof. Vaughan in October 2009 (after *Imeldific!* had opened) and she told me they had 'tracked down' the remaining garments which were in boxes for me to look through. When I went through the garments I discovered that there were still items that had never been reworked.

What interested me about *eCHO* was that it was such an unusual kind of collection. Looking at the original garments versus the 'new' creations was like viewing a kind of translation in progress. Each designer seemed to have approached the history of the previous life of their garment differently. It was hard for me to get a sense of the scale of the original project, but due to the sheer number of participants involved it was clearly very ambitious. The majority of the garments created for the project had since been dispersed. Some had gone back to the London College of Fashion and Otago Polytechnic in New Zealand (the international colleges who had participated in the project). Others went home with students from

[47] At the same time that I discussed the project with Prof. Vaughan, some of the remaining *eCHO* garments had been brought back to life through a series of photographs and a short summary to be included in *five: fashion musings*, a journal that QUT Fashion was publishing, and which I had contributed an edited section of my Honours thesis to, titled 'The model as blank page: Elle Muliarchyk's photographs.'

QUT Fashion. Curiously, the designer garments had been kept. Given the amount of time that had passed, I knew it would be difficult to retrace the lost items. The twenty or so garments that remained were only a small fraction of what had been made, but there was something about this small collection that was compelling. I didn't want to recreate what had happened in the original *eCHO* performance, and as such didn't need to track down every piece that had been made. In the New Year (2010) I photographed the garments and began conceptualising the exhibition.

The exhibition would occupy the same space I had worked with for *wearer/maker/wearer*, and again proposed a new direction for the QUT Art Museum. While *wearer/maker/wearer* presented a new art form to the museum through the work of an emerging fashion designer, the *eCHO* exhibition was a much more overt challenge to the museum's collecting and exhibiting practices. Due to their state of degradation, and lack of provenance, the *eCHO* garments had been deemed insignificant enough for the National Trust not to keep or restore them. This concept played on my mind; how do institutions and trusts decide what is 'worthy' of safeguarding and inclusion, and what isn't? There is inevitably a process of exclusion that takes place in collection. There were thus tensions at play between institutional processes of collection and care, alongside fashion's desire for change inherent to the original collection of 'discarded' garments. My curatorial approach attempted to re-write these aspects of the *eCHO* project, seeking instead to utilise the remaining pieces to tell stories around the potential lives embedded within the garments. Some of these were unaltered, while others had been over-written with new stories as remade objects.

Displaying these garments in the museum raised a number of issues that I sought to address in my exhibition. I knowingly and deliberately used the museum space to create an exhibition which also questioned the museum processes that had kept these garments from being protected or displayed in the first place. Working adjunctly facilitated a negotiation of typical curatorial approaches to fashion, enabling me to undertake this unorthodox exhibition of once fashionable and valuable items. While many museums have collected clothing and textiles since their inception, the exhibition of

these items and specific curatorial positions for their care are recent occurrences (Taylor, 2004; Steele, 2008). This raises the issue of clothing and fashion as often sidelined within institutions, alongside the responsibility of institutions and curators for safeguarding collections. Thus the *eCHO* exhibition both explored and challenged these histories. Firstly, it continued my inclusion of fashion and clothing in an art museum context. However, the exhibition also questioned the curator's role of 'safeguarding' by highlighting the fact that the *eCHO* garments had been lost and discarded due to a perceived lack of value.

Through displaying items of clothing which had been discarded by an institution, the *eCHO* exhibition highlighted customary institutional practices. It also questioned their validity through deliberately re-instating discarded objects back into the museum space. Inhabiting an adjunct curatorial position facilitated this semi-detached level of engagement. Graham & Cooke, in exploring the adjunct curator's role, state that there is "greater scope for [adjunct] curators to posit their own politics and tastes beyond that of the institution with which they are working" (2010: 151). This point is particularly relevant to this project. Due to my adjunct position I could question the museum processes that allowed the eCHO garments to be discarded in the first place. At the same time, my 'tastes' as a curator came into play in the exhibition design and display.

My understanding of the exhibited garments centred on the materiality of clothing as a conduit to the personal, poetic and memory. There was a poetic element to the remaining garments that informed my approach to their display. As in my previous exhibitions, such as *Modern Times*, sourcing historically specific images of nevertheless 'imagined owners' was something I pursued as a vehicle for telling stories about the garments. My approach to this project was different to an institutional fashion curator, whose training would dictate a less 'interpretive' approach to the objects and their contextualisation. However, as an adjunct curator I could delve into the very large element of imagined history within the project.

I started collecting old cabinet photographs from the same period as the *eCHO* garments. I found and bought these from other collectors. These

photographs themselves were items that had been cast-off and separated from their histories. No names remained to identify who these images were of. Marrying these images with the discarded and forgotten garments had a kind of mismatched symmetry. These photographs were included in the exhibition; not as historical, accurate documents, but as narrative devices for imagining who these people might have been. The aim, as in the *Modern Handbags* exhibition, was to provide the viewer with an image of who might have owned and worn the exhibited items. Conjuring identities in this way links images with garments—mentioned earlier in relation to Diana Vreeland's work—with my curatorial 'imagining.' Hence the garments or objects become part of a larger narrative, which the exhibition aims to communicate. In this sense my curatorial practice uses garments as a vehicle for story-telling. The garment remains an important feature of the exhibition, but is also bound up in a larger narrative where personal identification with the objects and their tactility is important.

In the lead-up to the exhibition, alongside collecting photographs, I began creating a series of what I called 'props'. I designed and made head-pieces for the contemporary, abstract mannequins that would display the 'new' designer garments in the main room of the Tom Heath Gallery. These head-pieces crowned each of the mannequins and utilised photocopied reproductions of the original images I had collected. This translation or reproduction mirrored the process undertaken by the designers when working with the original garments. Reproducing these images, I created a huge body of phantom identities that were scattered (literally, in torn pieces of photocopied photographs) at the feet of the mannequins wearing the 'new' *eCHO* pieces (figure 45). This process sought to link the old and new garments together, while at the same time highlighting my intervention in the project as an adjunct curator interpreting and in a sense re-writing the story of this collection of clothing. In the lead-up to the show I had also engaged in the process of 're-working' that the *eCHO* project had established. Among the items left behind from the original donation were a number of antique dolls. These appeared to have been re-worked to an extent, but were left unfinished. As such, they were half-way between redesigned and untouched. Rather than leave them in this state of

limbo, I invited Hannah Gartside, a QUT Fashion Honours student and doll-maker, to continue the process of re-working these dolls (figure 47).

A quote from fashion curator Amy de la Haye was very pertinent to the underlying concepts of the show. I hand-wrote this in large text around the main gallery room:

> Perhaps more than any other medium, worn clothing offers tangible evidence of lives lived, partly because its very materiality is altered by, and bears imprints of, its original owner… When worn clothes enter a museum they embark upon a new "life" and serve new functions. In the process, what was once intimate can become impersonal—although often the very reason worn clothes are presented to a museum is to prevent them becoming part of the anonymous detritus of our material culture, and thus to retain their meaning. (2006: 135-36).

Central to de la Haye's remarks is an acknowledgement of the significance of clothing as objects imbued with personal histories and a recognition of the role played by museums in displaying and re-contextualising these items. As such, her statement seemed to encapsulate a lot of what I was exploring with the *eCHO* exhibition. However, as an adjunct curator I also explored these concepts in less rigid ways than an institutional curator would.

Other theorists explore clothing as significant to personal stories and memory. Peter Stallybrass states that "in thinking of clothes as passing fashions, we repeat less than half-truth. Bodies come and go; the clothes which have received those bodies survive" (1993: 35) (figure 49). My writing in the exhibition was contained on a single panel of text at the entrance to the show (as in *wearer/maker/wearer*), which sought to identify the themes within the exhibition and also acknowledge the original histories of the project:

> Museum fashion exhibitions generally present garments with a certain type of historical value; the 'best example' of a particular period, or the work of a significant designer. As viewers we expect to see the best examples—across all media—on display when we enter a museum. While this is an important function of the museum, what this selection often lacks is the countless other histories that the neglected objects contain. In a sense, these histories are secret; they are usually not recorded and often become lost forever. In the case of fashion, it could be said that these secret histories are stored in the creases, marks and scents of clothes left behind.

> The following exhibition explores such histories through the restaging of a unique collaborative project called eCHO, which took place in 2003. eCHO partnered international researchers, QUT staff and students, and Australian fashion designers with a collection of garments that were gifted to QUT fashion by the National Trust, dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries. These garments weren't of 'museum quality;' many were damaged, had no locatable origin, and were considered beyond repair by conservators. As such, they were given another life by being re-worked into 'new' garments and displayed through a life performance.
>
> Seven years later, some of these garments remain together in a small collection at QUT. The current exhibition is the first time that they have been displayed in a static gallery space, with the intention of inviting careful and close consideration of their materiality, and showing the dialogue between their past and present forms. This exhibition also reveals several remaining garments from the original National Trust donation that were never re-worked. The following installation seeks to excavate and explore the hidden memories, lives and histories of these garments (Buick, 2010).

This statement articulates the themes of the exhibition and illustrates the concerns I was able to emphasise due to occupying an adjunct position within an institutional environment. The show was called *Material Memories: restaging the eCHO project*. It ran from July 13th – August 22nd 2010 (figure 44 – 49).

Figure 45. ***Material Memories*****, QUT Art Museum, 2010. Photograph by Nadia Buick.**

Figure 46. ***Material Memories*****, QUT Art Museum, 2010. Photograph by Nadia Buick.**

Figure 47. ***Material Memories*****, QUT Art Museum, 2010. Photograph by Nadia Buick**

Figure 48. ***Material Memories*****, QUT Art Museum, 2010. Photograph by Nadia Buick**

Figure 49. ***Material Memories*****, QUT Art Museum, 2010. Photograph by Nadia Buick**

Figure 50. ***Material Memories*****, QUT Art Museum, 2010. Photograph by Nadia Buick**

The Curated Spectacle

August 13th – October 22nd, 2010

thecuratedspectacle.wordpress.com (ongoing)

Soon after the opening of *Material Memories* I travelled to New York, London and Paris on a research trip. By mid 2010 a key element of my research centred on moving beyond the museum as the dominant site for fashion curation. Therefore I explored fashion display and curation as a form of visual culture across both commercial and institutional sites. While I undertook significant research into this topic within a wide range of written sources (Chapter Two), as a curator it was also important to explore this concept from a practice-based perspective. Consequently, I sought to document first-hand a range of different approaches to displaying fashion. My curatorial work within the contexts of institutional, commercial and private contexts had raised this idea. Looking at the work of other adjunct curators, such as Cecil Beaton and Diana Vreeland also cemented the impression that the relationship between fashion curation and approaches to display in sites such as department stores and window displays had its own distinct history that could also potentially impact my work[48].

While museums and department stores had been perceived as ideologically opposed in modernist discourse they in fact shared a history and teleology (as discussed in Chapter Two). Paris, New York and London are not only cultural centres (housing some of the world's most prestigious museums), but are also centres for modern fashion. My project aimed to examine the extent to which fashion is 'curated' across both of these modern contexts. Therefore I visited both types of institutions to document approaches to fashion display and to physically and visually explore multiple sites of fashion curation. The approaches to display in large, historic department stores such as Selfridges and Le Bon Marché can be highly innovative and have influenced fashion curation in the museum. Comparing the

[48] These sites, their displays and exhibitions, were impossible to see without physically visiting and documenting them in person. Visiting and documenting these sites at this stage in the candidature was imperative in order to build an archive of data to draw upon for both my curatorial practice and PhD research.

approaches to visual display at cultural institutions versus retail sites was designed to allow an overview of fashion curation that didn't limit the field to one type of environment. At the same time, my experiences working as an adjunct curator across these sites revealed their similarities and differences. For instance, the display of a curated archive in Jean Brown is intentionally positioned to contextualise good design as a collectible investment. The display of similar objects in the institutional environment of the library served to educate viewers about the history of Modernist art and design, particularly in regards to women's lives and changes in fashion.

Throughout the research trip, I used photography to record the display environments I encountered on a daily basis. As mentioned in Chapter Two, there is a history of practice (particularly surrounding the documentation of arcades and window displays and particularly in New York and Paris) which was influential on my approach. In order to record my observations and exploration of the many approaches to fashion display I photographed as much material as possible with the aim of uploading and 'archiving' it in a publically accessible blog, *thecuratedspectacle.wordpress.com.* This is an ongoing project. However, I would like to briefly address this body of work and its influence on my research direction. These images showcase another practice-based element of my research, and complement my curatorial practice.

My trip began in New York, and my first day in the city was the last day of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute exhibition, *American Woman: Fashioning a National Identity.* Unfortunately, after taking my first photo (figure. 50) I was told that no photography was allowed, and I faced this problem in most exhibition environments. The exhibition itself was made up of a series of tableaux that were designed to demonstrate the various kinds of woman that fashion proposed throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries in the United States. From a visual perspective the tableaux could have been window displays in a department store. Indeed, this is a comparison that some theorists have made in regards to the Met fashion exhibitions (see Chapter Two & McNeil, 2006).

Figure 51. *American Woman*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010.

In discussing *AngloMania* McNeil sees this as a 'new' format for the fashion exhibition, rather than the continuation of a visual display pattern between the museum and department store. However, the use of tableaux as a display technique unites the visual cultures of sites ranging from world's fairs, wax museums, historical houses and fashion museums, through to window displays and department stores. As I discovered, this set-like staging was contemporaneously found in the windows of stores like Bergdorf Goodman (figure 51).

Figure 52. New York, Bergdorf Goodman window display, Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Set up off the ground and behind glass, the store window can be seen as a kind of vitrine, similar to the museum. The museum exhibitions I visited were off limits for photography as a general rule, so the window became the most accessible environment for me to document. Existing as an interface between the store and street, I frequently visited the windows at night, when fewer people were in danger of walking through my shot, and less intense reflection hindered my ability to get a clear image. Like the museum, upper-class department stores such as Bergdorf Goodman create environments that have a sense of 'untouchability'. This is reinforced by security guards, who, like in the museum, approach and request that no photographs are taken. Again the window became a solution to this problem, while at the same time being the most consistent space in which spectacular display techniques were employed. In New York the dialogue between the Costume Institute and the major department stores' windows was not surprising, and in some cases was a mutual exchange, (as I have already discussed in Chapter Two).

While I had originally conceived of the museum as a major site for documentation during the trip, many of these institutions did not allow photography in special exhibition environments. However, other highly accessible sites also piqued my interest, such as flea markets and thrift stores. While flea markets tended to produce a mass of discarded items, piled high and juxtaposed in random but visually enticing ways, the thrift

stores in New York often had window displays to rival the large department stores. One chain of thrift stores in particular, The Housing Works, created a sophisticated level of visual display akin to a boutique, while at the same time utilising their second-hand stock to create what were specifically labelled "curated windows," (figures 52 & 53). The use of the word 'curated' to describe retail environments was something I observed regularly during my trip. New York Times contributor Alex Williams raised this point in 2009, saying:

> The word "curate," lofty and once rarely spoken outside exhibition corridors or British parishes, has become a fashionable code word among the aesthetically minded, who seem to paste it onto any activity that involves culling and selecting. In more print-centric times, the term of art was "edit" — as in a boutique edits its dress collections carefully. But now, among designers, disc jockeys, club promoters, bloggers and thrift-store owners, curate is code for "I have a discerning eye and great taste."

Williams' description of the way the word 'curate' is used eradicates the connotations of care-taking and instead places emphasis on the aesthetics of display. At the same time, taste or connoisseurship are also central and have long been associated with the curator's role (Lord & Lord, 1997:64). The use of the word 'curated' to describe these window displays forces a dialogue around what the curator does and what is involved in curating. For some curators, the adoption of this term to describe retail environments may be offensive. In my own research I have explored the long history of convergence between the store and museum (whose practices of display have often been related), highlighting the potential for a more fluid approach to the use of the word 'curated' across these sites.

Figure 53. Housing Works window display. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 54. Housing Works window display. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

The contrast between the polished environments of the museum and department store and the gritty randomness of the flea market and junk store provided a context for my own practice. While the spectacular sheen of the window display or high-level museum exhibition had an immediate impact, my interest in the 'stuff' of flea markets had a more personal affinity. The way that objects were arranged in the market environments often tapped into something intimate, akin to how they might be arranged in a bedroom, for instance. This ranged from careful arrangement or display (such as might be found on a dressing table) to piles of clothing (such as those in the home, waiting to be put away). Evidence of previous owners and wearers could literally be seen and felt in discarded items of clothing and footwear. This was something I had tried to convey in the exhibition I had curated prior to travelling, *Material Memories*. As already discussed, this exhibition displayed damaged and stained garments separated from their original histories and owners. And again, this topic had also come up in the *Modern Times* exhibition, where my speculation into the lives and histories of the women who had owned the handbags became a significant element of my curatorial approach to their display. At the same time, my next exhibition (discussed below), *Dreaming of Chanel*, would have similar themes and concerns.

Another important contrast within the market site was the ability to touch and acquire things, rather than just look. This point raises the tension between the private *Wunderkammer* and the public museum. While I have my own private collection of vintage clothing—a self-contained wardrobe which relates to the cabinet of curiosities and taxonomy—I chose not to integrate this into my curatorial projects, instead working with the private collections of others. This is a contradictory element of my work, which has been concerned with the ability of tactile objects to act as story-tellers. Rather than emphasise my own power as an owner or overseer of a collection, I have deliberately collaborated with others and worked in conjunction with institutions in order to stage exhibitions, subsequently telling the stories of others, rather than my own.

The images taken as part of this project actually seek to bridge this gap. They form a curated collection of visual landscapes which interest me as both a collector (objects which I would like to acquire) and a curator (sites and objects of historical significance displayed publically). In addition, the public and private collection is central to all of the sites I photographed. Each environment showcases a staged display of a particular collection of objects. In some cases these collections had institutional imperatives, while in others the collection of objects seemed much closer to hoarding. The majority of environments I photographed were temporary. Markets get packed up for the day and arrangements change. Museum exhibitions pass and objects are put back into storage, returned to collectors or sent back to other institutions. Window displays last only weeks at a time. The desire to capture and collect these environments before they passed away again reminded me of Eugene Atget and Berenice Abbott, who obsessively documented the constantly changing environments of Paris and New York.

By the end of my trip I had literally taken thousands of photographs. Below is a selection of some of these images (figures. 54-141), taken between August and October 2010. I continue to sort through this massive collection and upload the photographs online, at http://thecuratedspectacle.wordpress.com[49].

[49] I presented a selection of these images at QUT's postgraduate conference, Ignite! in 2010.

Figure 55. Chelsea Flea Market, New York. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 56. Brooklyn Flea Market, New York. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 57. New York: window display, SoHo. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 58. New York: window display, SoHo. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 59. New York. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 60. New York: window display, SoHo. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 61. Vintage mannequin, New York. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010.

Figure 62. New York, American Apparel window display. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 63. New York, wedding themed window display. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 64. New York, Hell's Kitchen Flea Market. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 65. New York, Hell's Kitchen Flea Market. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 66. New York, window display. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 67. New York, Sak's Fifth Avenue department store. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 68. New York, Macy's department store. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 69. New York, Chelsea flea market. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010.

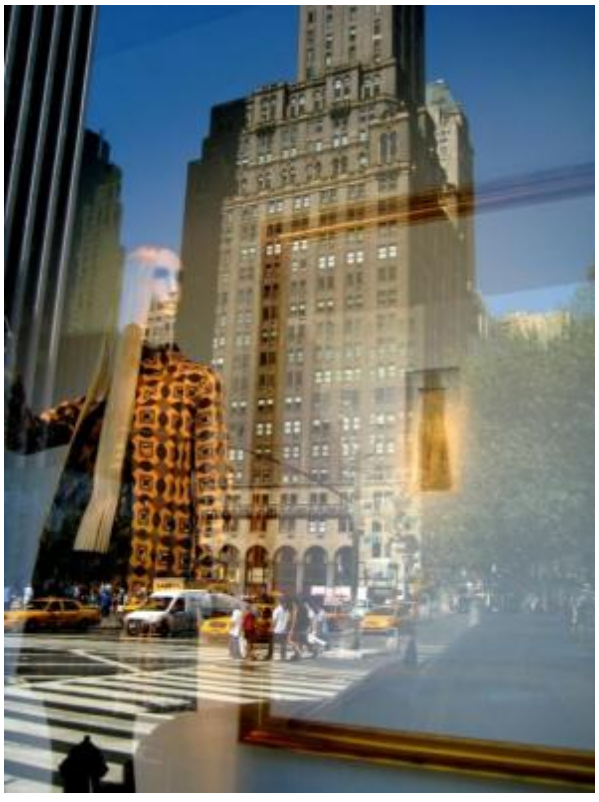

Figure 70. New York, Bergdorf Goodman. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 71. New York, Bergdorf Goodman. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 72. New York, Bergdorf Goodman. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 73. New York, Bergdorf Goodman. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 74. New York, Bergdorf Goodman. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 75. New York, Chanel. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 76. New York, Bergdorf Goodman. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 77. New York, East Village window. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 78. New York, East Village window collage. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 79. New York, Barney's. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 80. New York, Barney's. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 81. New York, Barney's. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 82. New York, Barney's. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 83. New York, Barney's. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 84. New York, Barney's. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 85. New York, Junk, Brooklyn. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 86. New York, H&M. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 87. New York, Macy's. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 88. New York, Miu Miu. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 89. New York, Brooklyn flea market. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 90. New York, Fendi. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 91. New York, Fendi. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 92. London, Portobello Road. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 93. London, Portobello Road. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 94. London, Portobello Road. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 95. London, Portobello Road. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 96. London, arcade. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 97. London, Topshop. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 98. London, Liberty & Co. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 99. London, Prada. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 100. London, Acne. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 101. London, Brick Lane market. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 102. London, Brick Lane market. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 103. London, V&A Museum. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 104. London, V&A Museum. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 105. London, Selfridges. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 106. London, Brown's. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 107. London, Harrod's. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 108. London, Topshop. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 109. Paris, Le Puces de Saint Ouen. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 110. Paris, Le Puces de Saint Ouen. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 111. Paris, Le Puces de Saint Ouen. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 112. Paris, Le Puces de Saint Ouen. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 113. Paris, Le Puces de Saint Ouen. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 114. Paris, Le Puces de Saint Ouen. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 115. Paris, Le Puces de Saint Ouen. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 116. Paris, Le Puces de Saint Ouen. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

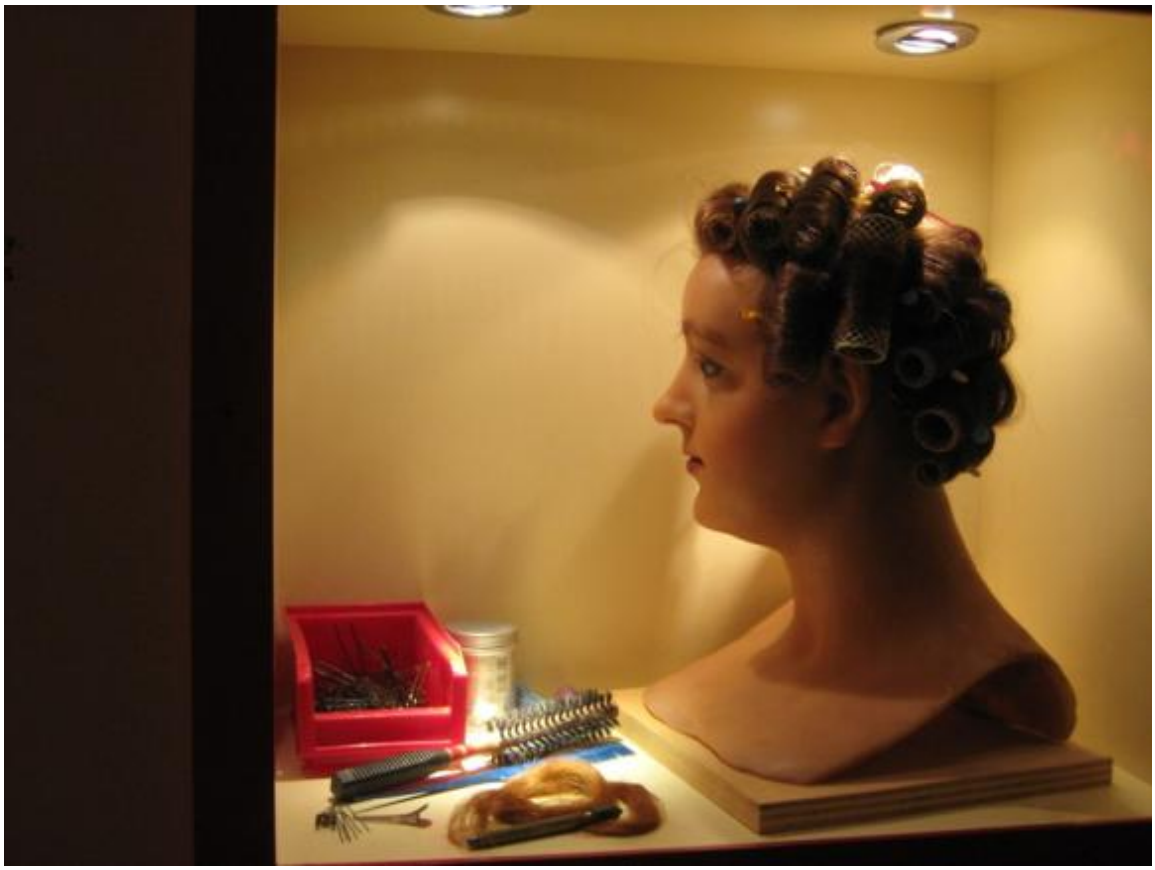

Figure 117. Paris, Musée Grevin. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 118. Paris, Galerie Vivienne. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 119. Paris, Passage Verdeau. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010.

Figure 120. Paris, Galerie Vivienne. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 121. Paris, Didier Ludot. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 122. Paris, arcade. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 123. Paris, Printemps. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 124. Paris, Printemps. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 125. Paris, Printemps. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 126. Paris, *Musée des Arts décoratifs.* Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 127. Paris, *Musée des Arts décoratifs.* Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 128. Paris, Galeries Lafayette. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 129. Paris, Le Bon Marché. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 130. Paris, Le Bon Marché. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

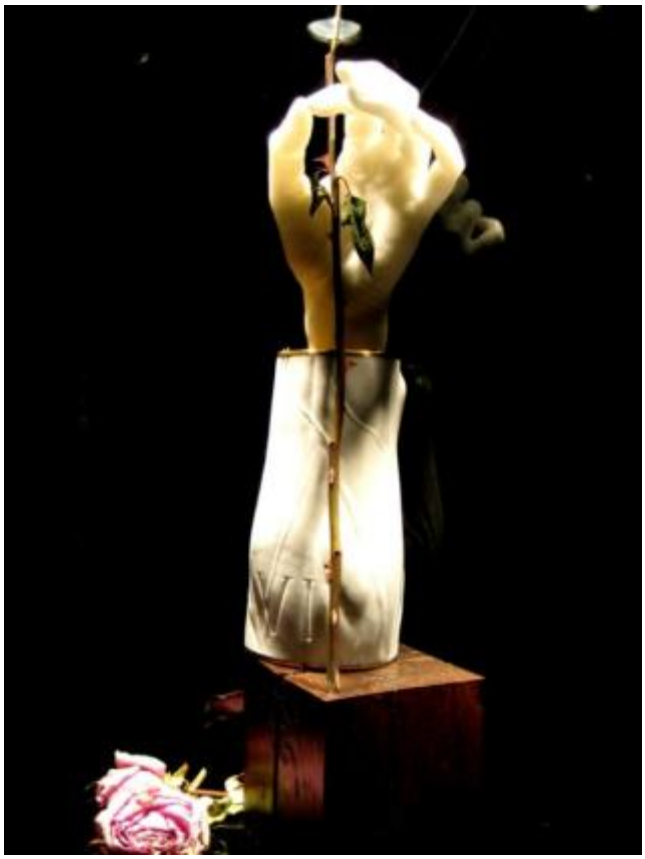

Figure 131. Paris, Le Bon Marché. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 132. Paris: Marché aux Puces de Porte de Vanves. Photograph by Nadia Buick.

Figure 133. *Paris, Marché d'Aligre. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010*

Figure 134 Paris, Marché aux Puces de Porte de Vanves. *Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010*

Figure 135. Paris, Marché aux Puces de Port de Montreuil. Photograph by Nadia Buick.

Figure 136. Paris, Vintage store. Photograph by Nadia Buick.

Figure 137. Paris, Vintage store window. Photograph by Nadia Buick

Figure 138. Paris, Colette. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010.

Figure 139. Paris, Prada Temporary Store, rue Saint Honoré. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010.

Figure 140. Paris, Louis Vuitton. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

Figure 141. Paris, Louis Vuitton. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010.

Figure 142. Paris, Musée de la Poupée. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2010

2011

Dreaming of Chanel[50]

QUT Art Museum, 26th August – 16th October, 2011

Dreaming of Chanel is the third and final exhibition I curated in conjunction with the QUT Art Museum. The exhibition further extended the approaches and ideas I had explored as an adjunct curator working with this institution that lacked a fashion collection or focus. The show presented more complex working scenarios for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was the largest fashion exhibition that I had curated, and the largest ever undertaken at the QUT Art Museum. Secondly, I was an intermediary between a private collection and collector, and a public institution on a much larger scale than previous shows such as *Modern Times – Modern Handbags*. *Dreaming of Chanel* was a much larger exhibition and took up the largest half of the museum's galleries. Many works were also presented: 45 garments, 20 accessories, 20 illustrations and ephemera.

The exhibition had at its centre a very clear context of story-telling around clothing and women's lives. Based on a book and drawn from the collection of one woman, *Dreaming of Chanel* show-cased both a physical and tangential collection of clothing. Known as the Darnell Collection, and amassed over a life time by Doris Darnell, the collection made its way to Australia through a twist of fate. Darnell was a Quaker who spent the majority of her life in Pennsylvania. She had a passion for clothing and social history, and throughout her life was bequeathed thousands of items of dress dating from the 1700s onwards. These came from friends, family and acquaintances all over the world who heard about the collection. When a 'new' item was received it usually arrived with a letter or photograph which detailed the story of the garment: who owned it, why it was bought, what occasion it was worn to, who made it, etc. As such, Darnell's collection became unique for its documentation of personal stories that

[50] Refer to Appendix E for further details about this exhibition

formed an enormous social history of the women whose clothing she received and safe-guarded.

In 2003, towards the end of her life, Doris Darnell wrote to her goddaughter, Charlotte Smith, who was living in Australia, expressing her intention of passing on the collection to Smith. It arrived in 2004. Since that time the collection has continued to grow, from roughly 3500 items to almost 6000 pieces representing 23 different countries. It is considered the largest private antique and vintage clothing collection in Australia. Smith upholds Darnell's desire to keep the collection alive through regular functions and speaking engagements that showcase the collection and open it up to a wider audience. In 2009 Smith published her first book, titled *Dreaming of Dior*, made up of approximately 140 garments from the collection (which were illustrated by Grant Cowan for the book) and their stories. A second book, *Dreaming of Chanel*, was published in 2010 and followed the same format as *Dreaming of Dior*.

As a private collection, the Darnell Collection is rare for its breadth of styles and eras as well as for its exceptional range of provenances. It is not strictly a 'fashion' collection, (terms which were discussed in Chapter One) and also encompasses items of costume, textiles and dress. While museum collections include objects of particular value often separated from their stories, the objects in the Darnell Collection do not favour a particular collecting technique. Rather, they represent the range of personal tastes from thousands of different owners. Furthermore, the context provided by the stories attached to each garment gives the collection an autobiographical dimension that is particularly fitting with clothing. For instance, many items were bought for special occasions, such as wedding dresses. Without a permanent museum space for the collection, Smith's books provide a form of public access to the collection and its stories. However, the books are illustrated rather than photographed. Their purpose is not as museum catalogues, but more as story-books. The level of attachment and association that the reader feels towards the stories of the garments is evidenced by the number of items that are received for the collection from people who have read and identified with the books.

As a reader I recognised the emphasis placed on personal stories and contacted Charlotte Smith with the intention of collaborating on an exhibition project in conjunction with the QUT Art Museum. The format of the books (a selection of garments which are in a sense 'labelled' through their individual story) seemed to mirror an exhibition. At the same time, they relate to my interests in personal collecting and clothing as a story-teller. In January 2011 I flew to Sydney to view the collection and select which of the 140 or so garments from the book I would display in the exhibition. Despite having the largest half of the museum to work with, there would only be space for roughly 45 garments plus accessories.

In the early stages of my involvement with the collection I formed a close working partnership with Charlotte Smith that centred around our shared interest in vintage and antique clothing, and the intimacy of telling the stories that are contained in the Darnell Collection garments. The process of going through the approximately 150 garments featured in *Dreaming of Chanel* book was an intimate experience that involved an inherent element of disclosure on Smith's behalf. Central to her role as custodian of the Darnell Collection is her duty to continue telling the stories attached to its many garments. Passing those stories on to me for the *Dreaming of Chanel* exhibition was a vital element of our collaboration. Through personally 'handing-over' the garments to me for the exhibition, Smith had in a sense given an element of the custodian role over to me—at least in regards to this group of garments— in an evocation of traditional curatorial responsibility. Once work began on the realisation of the exhibition in the museum environment, I worked in conjunction with both the museum and the Darnell Collection.

Reiterating the approaches taken in my previous exhibitions, my selection of the garments for *Dreaming of Chanel* centred on the stories they revealed, rather than individual designers or particular historical periods. I identified over-riding themes in the stories that would determine my approach to the exhibition. The four themes acted like chapters which I translated into the exhibition space, which was itself divided into four distinct spaces. The book and its stories formed a template that I used throughout the project, from the selection of the garments, to their display

and dissemination within the museum space. The themes were; 'A History of Women'; 'F is for Fashion'; 'Things I Treasure' and 'Love Stories'.

The labelling for this exhibition extended on some of my previous work and tested new approaches. I chose to use a floor sheet rather than fill the space with labels. The purpose of this floor sheet was to allow the viewer to move through the exhibition at their own pace without having to crowd around a wall label. Like a book, it was an intimate object held in the viewer's hands as they moved through the exhibition. Approaching the labelling in this way also allowed the incorporation of the quite detailed and personal stories for each garment. The following is an example of the kinds of stories found in the exhibition, belonging to a 1940s burgundy lace and taffeta dress:

> Once, when Doris had finished a talk about the history of fashion at a local university, an elderly man came up and announced that, although he was legally blind and couldn't see the show very well, her stories had put paid to his plans to sneak out early… Two days later, this stunning dress arrived in the post. Enclosed was a note: 'My dear wife wore this dress. It was her favourite. I hope you will tell her story. She was my greatest love.

Each garment was listed on the floor sheet with its corresponding story. I edited these from Smith's wording in the book, which was another collaborative process revolving around the significance of each garment's narrative.

Critics and curators discussing fashion exhibitions frequently mention their popularity (de la Haye, 2010, Menkes, 2011). Reflecting this, attendance for the exhibition was high by the museum's standards; 8,000 people viewed *Dreaming of Chanel* over seven weeks. The exhibition received significant newspaper, magazine and online coverage. I conducted a number of curator's tours which were populated with women keen to share their stories with me afterwards. This continued the strand of storytelling inherent in the exhibition and also continued to position me as the surrogate caretaker of these stories while the collection was displayed in the museum. Alongside the garments was a selection of the book's original illustrations juxtaposed with their garment. Again images were juxtaposed with garments, as in several of my earlier exhibitions. Also included was a selection of ephemera relating to Doris Darnell which I

included to acknowledge her presence within the exhibition and as the original custodian of the collection.

While *Dreaming of Chanel* is the largest fashion exhibition undertaken at the museum, the typical institutional restrictions associated with displaying fashion were relaxed due to the fact that the objects were drawn from a private collection. This allowed a level of intimacy for viewers who were not forced to engage with the garments behind glass. Furthermore, the imposition of other restrictions, such as low lighting levels, did not need to be as strict. While always mindful of caring for and protecting the collection, through my collaboration with Smith I could challenge and subvert the role of the typical institutional fashion curator. Collaborating with Charlotte Smith, who values public interaction with the Darnell Collection as a way to ensure its survival, alongside my adjunct position in relation to the QUT Art Museum, meant that typical restrictions were not imposed in *Dreaming of Chanel*. This more open process is one of the most obvious benefits of working adjunctly to overcome the dominant concerns and criticisms surrounding fashion in the museum.

Dreaming of Chanel ran from the 26th August – 16th October, 2011 (figure 142 – 152).

Figure 143. Dreaming of Chanel at QUT Art Museum, exterior view. Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2011.

Figure 144. Dreaming of Chanel (Chanel wedding dress), QUT Art Museum. Photograph by Ian Golding, 2011.

Figure 145. Dreaming of Chanel ('Love Stories' room), QUT Art Museum. Photograph by Ian Golding, 2011.

Figure 146. Dreaming of Chanel ('Things I Treasure' room). QUT Art Museum, photograph by Nadia Buick, 2011.

Figure 147. Dreaming of Chanel ('Things I Treasure' room). QUT Art Museum, photograph by Nadia Buick, 2011.

Figure 148. Dreaming of Chanel ('History of Women' room). QUT Art Museum, photograph by Nadia Buick, 2011.

Figure 149. Dreaming of Chanel ('History of Women' room). QUT Art Museum, photograph by Nadia Buick, 2011.

Figure 150. Installation view – garments by Emilio Pucci (foreground) and Zandra Rhodes (background) Photograph by Nadia Buick, 2011.

Figure 151. Installation view – 1920s girl's dress, photograph by Nadia Buick, 2011

Figure 152. Grant Cowan Illustrations, Dreaming of Chanel. QUT Art Museum, photograph by Nadia Buick, 2011.

Figure 153. Dreaming of Chanel, accessories cabinet. QUT Art Museum, photograph by Nadia Buick, 2011.

Creative Practice Review Conclusion

The central aim of this chapter has been to discuss the creative practice undertaken throughout my candidature. Essential to this aim has been a detailed overview of the five exhibitions and one series of photographs carried out as part of my PhD. As was discussed in Chapter Two, exhibitions are temporary events that are often difficult to get a sense of once they have passed. This is particularly true in terms of images and details relating to the exhibition environment and layout.

Within this chapter I have attempted to articulate my working methods and processes as an emerging adjunct fashion curator. Central to this has been articulating my adjunct position within my curatorial projects. I have worked predominantly in conjunction with public institutions, while also collaborating with private collections, collectors and other individuals. Every exhibition project undertaken during my candidature has involved the careful consideration of the women with whom I have worked. From the close partnership formed with Paula Dunlop around the realisation of *wearer/maker/wearer* through to my role as 'expert' in the Jean Brown exhibitions. My collaborative relationship with Charlotte Smith is different again, whereby I proximally absorbed the role of 'custodian' of the Darnell Collection during the *Dreaming of Chanel* exhibition; feeling a sense of responsibility to the stories attached to the clothes. Along with individuals, my collaborations have also extended to the garments themselves. My close engagement with items of clothing as communicators or story-tellers - particularly in the *Material Memories* and *Dreaming of Chanel* exhibitions - reveals the close relationship I formed with the garments throughout my curatorial process of 'telling the stories.'

As an 'adjunct' curator I have pragmatically negotiated different working conditions and conversed with a range of individuals whose influences have been impactful. Working with private collections has in some cases allowed a level of freedom within my curatorial approach, however, my exhibitions have generally been located in institutional environments. Despite this contradiction, I have maintained a number of consistent concerns which I have discussed here. Firstly, all of my curatorial projects have exhibited old

and worn clothing. *Modern Times, Modern Handbags* introduced a private collection of early and mid-twentieth century fashion objects into the State Library, whose histories were imagined through a story-telling process which juxtaposed archival images with the bags. *wearer/maker/wearer* revealed a dress-maker's re-invention of vintage pieces of clothing. *Imeldific!* amassed a collection of footwear from throughout the 20th century. *Material Memories* re-exhibited a collection of discarded and re-designed clothing from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whose histories had been lost, and *Dreaming of Chanel* displayed a small aspect of a large private collection containing items from the early 1800s through to the 2000s.

Other consistent approaches to my exhibition projects have included: the significance of language, text and labelling when displaying objects within the museum, library and store; working with private collections and collectors; the biography (often imagined) of clothing, and uniting images with garments as a display technique within fashion exhibitions. At the same time, while these exhibitions have not been explicitly feminist, they have all involved collaboration with women and the telling of women's stories in relation to fashion objects, revealing the deeply gendered role that fashionable garments play and the centrality of them to female identity-formulation. The collaborative processes at the heart of my practice challenge the dominance of individual authorship which is frequently emphasised in curatorial discourse, and utilise clothing as a conduit for telling stories about women.

Conclusion

This research project examines the role of the curator and the impact of site on current models of fashion curatorial practice. The central aim of this research has been to demonstrate a range of theories, histories, and practices that contribute to the emerging field of fashion curation. In doing so, I have drawn upon a variety of frameworks, including discourses of art curation, museology, the social and cultural histories of particular sites, and a broad exploration of the development of fashion exhibition and curation. In this process I have investigated a collection of themes and debates that seem to follow fashion in whatever territory it occupies. These include its relationship to art, the role that gender and the body play in its status as a field of enquiry, and its position in sites such as the museum. Most significantly, this research has identified the dominance of two curatorial models for fashion – the independent and institutional – while arguing for the introduction of a third: the adjunct fashion curator.

I began this research with a desire to frame my practice and interests as an emerging fashion curator. During this process I started to consider the vexed relationship between the terms 'fashion' and 'curation.' I delved into the possibility that a history of fashion display and exhibition existed outside of the museum in sites such as department stores and window displays. This problematising provided a context for my research and praxis beyond the dominant debates that located fashion curation as exclusive to the museum. I have argued that sites such as department stores and shop windows contribute to the histories and growing discourse of fashion curation, not least because of their temporal proximity to the rise of museum collections and exhibitions of fashion. In a contemporary setting I argue that many of the criticisms that museum fashion exhibitions face may have already been addressed historically in the relationship between perceived commercial environments and institutional sites. These criticisms include the commercial nature of fashion and issues of display and reception in the museum environment.

The significance of site in relation to my practice and fashion curation generally has been a guiding force throughout this research project. Through an analysis of the connection between curatorial roles and specific sites I have demonstrated the ideological positions of dominant curatorial approaches. Generally curators take on specific roles through deliberate and strategic choices. For instance, institutional curators are firmly located within a particular museum site and this provides them with a permanent collection, institutional resources and stability. By contrast, independent curators (most notably linked to Harald Szeemann's deliberate rejection of institutional frameworks) are not tied to a single site or setting. This is a deliberate ideological position that proposes curatorial independence as directly connected to authorial integrity and creativity. Occupying an intermediary position, the adjunct curator represents a negotiated relationship to site in which ideological binaries (public/private, commercial/institutional) are challenged. The adjunct curator works with powerful institutional partners (museums, collections) but also has a level of independence.

I have worked across a number of sites throughout my candidature to realise a range of curatorial projects. Acting adjunctly facilitated working conditions that allowed me to traverse multiple sites such as stores, libraries and museums. These sites have impacted my curatorial process through their differing contexts, audiences and guiding principles. At the same time, I frequently subverted site-specific rules by collaborating with external partners. For instance, while I consistently collaborated with the QUT Art Museum, I was able to be creative with exhibition conditions due to my introduction of private collections that were not as restricted by museum protocols. In the case of fashion, this is of particular significance due to material-specific restrictions, such as those relating to display conditions and duration. For instance, I re-introduced a discarded museum collection back into an institutional site in the *Material Memories* exhibition, and could also display precious garments in open museum settings (not behind glass) with higher light-levels for *Dreaming of Chanel*.

I have worked across various sites and utilised an adjunct curatorial position to offer a potential solution for the fashion curator to escape or

undermine current debates and curatorial models. I have utilised and applied this term from a practitioner's perspective in order to contribute to the growing field of fashion curation. The introduction of the adjunct model to the existing discourse allows a greater refinement of the fashion curator's role. As such, I argue that the term 'adjunct' has specific connotations for the curator of fashion.

Firstly, the introduction of the adjunct fashion curator allows an expansion beyond the current ideological split between independent and institutional models. Independent fashion curators work in a freelance capacity, while institutional curators have permanent positions revolving around an institutional collection. The adjunct fashion curator is a negotiated adaptation of these two positions. They work in close conjunction with institutional sites, but also import their own external interests, connections and viewpoints to transform that site. As such, the adjunct curator sits between independent and institutional roles and thus offers a nuanced position and a new strategy for fashion curators.

Secondly, the term 'adjunct' is ideologically suited to fashion. The word adjunct suggests an auxiliary or subordinate existence in relation to an established entity. Despite its global growth in popularity as the subject of museum exhibitions and university courses, fashion continues to be conceptualised as subordinate to art in hierarchical models of analysis and context. Utilising the term 'adjunct' acknowledges and gives a name to the complexities surrounding fashion's inclusion in museum collections and exhibition environments. Fashion's relationship to the body, gender, consumption and its status as a functional 'worn' object have all contributed to its subordinate position. As such, the term adjunct is a loaded name that the curator of fashion can apply knowingly to her/his negotiated practice in order to escape the limiting binaries of the museological paradigm.

As an emerging practitioner my work did not fit comfortably within the dominant fashion curatorial models. I have knowingly adapted the term 'adjunct' from art curatorial discourse, where Cooke and Graham (2010) use it in relation to New Media curation. Through my exploration and

adaptation of this term I have excavated fashion curatorial approaches that have occupied an uneasy position within this emergent discourse. For instance, I have demonstrated that the work of a contentious figure such as Diana Vreeland might be reappraised through the lens of the adjunct fashion curator. Critiques of Vreeland's work have implicitly situated her practice as institutional (due to her partnership with the Met) and as such have focused on reinforcing binaries that situate fashion on the negative side of 'good vs. bad' divisions. These binaries are typically: fashion/art, commercial/cultural, sensual/cerebral, and in relation to fashion curatorial approaches: institutional/independent. As a result, there is an intrinsic expectation of choosing a side between these oppositional positions. However, I argue that the introduction of an adjunct position provides a potential 'escape route' for the fashion curator, between or outside of these binaries.

It is arguably the work of Cecil Beaton, however, that best demonstrates the potential advantages of occupying an adjunct position. In the best case scenario, the adjunct fashion curator can negotiate among multiple positions in order to successfully satisfy each stakeholder. While independent curators act as freelance agents with their own identity or brand to communicate, and the institutional curator is duty-bound to their home institution, in an ideal situation the adjunct curator can balance their own concerns with those of institutional or commercial partners and potentially meet each stakeholder's requirements. In Beaton's case this was achieved: the institution he partnered with received a world-renowned collection of contemporary fashion due to Beaton's exhibition and connections. The benefactors of individual precious items could ultimately rely on the fact that through their affiliation with Beaton and the V&A their pieces would be preserved by a world-class institution (the desire of many collectors). And Beaton was able to explore and honour his interests by show-casing the personal connections that he had built over a life-time as a prominent photographer, stage and costume designer.

In my own adjunct curatorial practice I have consistently attempted to satisfy institutional partners, private collectors and my personal aims and interests. As such, I have been in a position of negotiation amongst

collaborative partnerships with individuals and institutions. In some cases this has been more successful than others. For instance, my scope for creativity was limited in the exhibition design for *Dreaming of Chanel* due to the time and budget constraints of working with a small university museum. However, working adjunctly also allows these constraints to be balanced against other freedoms, such as introducing new mediums and collections into the institutional environment. As such, working in an adjunct capacity can produce significant changes to institutional policies and methodologies.

For instance, my adjunct partnership with the QUT Art Museum resulted in three fashion exhibitions being staged in an institution without a fashion or textiles collection. This represents a considerable shift in the institutional paradigm of this museum; whose staff, exhibition programming and collection did not previously involve fashion or textiles. Hence an adjunct partnership can facilitate the negotiation of institutional and curatorial methodologies outside of those usually dictated by a museum's pre-existing approaches and policies.

This is also the case in my exhibition in conjunction with the State Library of Queensland, *Modern Times – Modern Handbags*. The context for this exhibition was dictated by its location within the Reference Library: a large-scale public environment not designed as an exhibition space (and a site never before used to display fashion). However, engaging with this site provided access to a collection of archival images and allowed me to explore a key thematic focus of my work: telling the stories of women. Hence, while the adjunct curator needs to integrate institutional concerns and constraints, this working method also allows the curator to develop their own interests, values and approaches. In my case, this involves not only elevating items of clothing through exhibition, but similarly connecting the stories of the women who wore them. As such, I introduce a history of women that is tied to and valued through worn items of clothing to the sites I work with.

Generally, most exhibitions of clothing characterise the exhibited items as representative of a dominant idea of fashion: either as a celebrity designer's

work or the style of a particular era. Furthermore, the exhibited fashion object is characterised in particular ways by the museum site in order to engage with a medium that is incredibly popular. My relationship to similar objects positions them as pieces of a material history that is explored using personal, gendered stories. However, I am aware that these items of clothing were also at one time part of the fashion system, and representative of an individual's style. This movement between an item of 'fashion'—symbolising a particular moment in time, social status or personal taste—and 'clothing'—something more generic or neutral, an object of dress—is central to my research and approach as a curator. Exhibiting clothing allows these complexities to be displayed. *Dreaming of Chanel* was at once an exhibition of intimate, material histories around items of clothing *and* an exhibition about highly aesthetic, beautiful objects of fashion that recalled particular eras and recounted personal style.

At the same time, fashion is a consumable object that is often (for this very reason) viewed with suspicion in the museum. My engagement with fashion acknowledges this aspect of fashion but does so through an emphasis on the ways in which we use and engage with fashion. For instance, when working with the Jean Brown Gallery – a high-end boutique – I framed the exhibited shoes as worn pieces and in relation to how women would have worn these items at different times throughout the twentieth century. Thus exhibiting these consumable items is a way to discuss how women have lived their lives and their relationship to fashion over time. As such, my curatorial practice presents alternative processes for fashion curation through connecting with multiple sites and engaging with methods to re-frame the fashion object as a personal, gendered medium. At the same time, my work engages with consumption and style. The conjoining of and fluctuations between these elements represent the complexities of fashion. These complexities are ideally suited to the exhibition context which can 'show and tell' through visual and written means.

Charting my journey as an emerging adjunct fashion curator thus suggests possible strategies for other curators in the field. I have argued that institutional and independent fashion exhibitions tend to follow dominant

formats, such as the exhibition of new or emerging fashion designers in group or individual shows; established fashion designers represented through retrospective exhibitions; collaborations with big name fashion designers and historical theme or era exhibitions. My own exhibitions have not pursued any of these formats. At the same time, I have not attempted to radically challenge or alter these dominant models. Adjunct curating has allowed me to utilise the exhibition format and my curatorial process as a way to develop a number of consistent concerns within my work. It has also allowed me to articulate an intermediary position between institutional and independent roles. Specifically, my work has focused on the impact of old and worn clothing, and the garment as a conduit for telling women's stories in relation to personal histories and style. Overall, my curatorial approach has utilised collaborative partnerships with various institutions and sites to explore this interest, and the adjunct fashion curator model has enabled this collaboration through its ability to mediate between institutions and private collections.

This research presents a theoretical and historical background to contemporary fashion curation through its exploration of the conceptual territory of this emerging discipline. At the same time, my research is rooted in practice and praxis. It seeks to provide an initial contribution to the idea of a 'toolkit' for fashion curating. In this case, my processes and negotiations as an adjunct curator contribute a model of practice for other emerging fashion curators. Thus this research is split between a detailed charting of my curatorial practice and processes across various exhibition projects, and a theoretical and historical charting of the conceptual territory surrounding fashion curation.

This project has employed a number of research modes. Field research and data gathering was undertaken during a research trip to explore and document various sites of fashion display in which a large body of images were produced. These images form a significant body of new data as original photographic images that have been utilised to test and explore both practical and conceptual concerns within the research project. These photographic images were produced as a way to methodically document sites of fashion display operating in specific international contexts in order

to contextualise my own range of exhibition approaches and techniques. Further, these images form an archive for future reference. As such, this research mode allowed me to test my own hypotheses in relation to the possible connections between sites of fashion display, rather than taking apparent divisions as a given.

Object-based approaches were used in the close study of images and material objects such as garments and accessories. Studying the physical properties of garments allowed an intimate exploration of personal stories to be conveyed in my exhibition projects. This in turn fuelled research concerns that have been explored in the exegesis, where archival and textual research across fashion studies, art history, visual culture and museology are utilised. The major outcomes of this research are a written exegesis exploring the theoretical and historical terrain of fashion curation alongside a practical investigation of five exhibition projects undertaken during the candidature. These exhibitions have been thoroughly documented and discussed in the exegesis, but should not be read as merely research data. Rather, they are significant research outcomes that have informed the written exegesis, while also providing a significant creative and practical research output. As such, both the theoretical and historical research and the creative work present the discovery of new information and a means of communicating this new knowledge.

Through exploring and defining a new model for fashion curation—the adjunct fashion curator—I have re-assessed the work of past practitioners while putting forward a practical account of the processes of an emerging adjunct curator. This research has combined this practical emphasis with a theoretical and historical analysis of the conceptual landscape of fashion curation. Predominantly, I have explored the position of fashion as a curated object within multiple histories and sites in order to make new claims for the emerging field of fashion curation. These contributions suggest new perspectives, possibilities and future advances for a discourse that is still in its early stages of development.

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Appendix A

Exhibition: *Modern Times – Modern Handbags*

Location: State Library of Queensland

Dates: 8th August - 20th November, 2009

i. List of Objects/Exhibition Labels

1. Armadillo Handbag, 1950s.
Leather and Armadillo, lined with satin, with brass fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

2. Snakeskin Clutch, 1940s.
Snakeskin, lined with satin, with metal fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

3. Alligator Handbag, 1955.
Alligator skin and leather, lined with cotton, with metal fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

4. Snakeskin Clutch, 1950s.
Snakeskin, lined with satin, with metal fittings,
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

5. Japanese Scene Purse, 1920s.

Leather and Bakelite, lined with satin, with metal fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

6. Shell Purse by Elsa Schiaparelli, 1950s.
Shell, lined with satin, with silver fittings and chain
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

7. Work Handbag, 1930s.
Leather, lined with fabric, with brass fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

8. Self-contained Handbag, 1930s.
Suede, lined with cotton, with glass mirror and brass fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

9. Purse with Mirror, 1930s.
Crepe, lined with satin, with brass and metal fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

10. Cage Closure Handbag, 1940s.
Velvet and chrome, lined with cotton
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

11. Enamel on Mesh Handbag by Mandalian, 1929.
Enamel and metal mesh with brass fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

12. Mesh Dance Bag, 1930s
Metal mesh with brass fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

13. Machine Beadwork Handbag, 1930s.
Metal and glass with satin lining and metal fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

14. Plastic Handbag, 1950s.
Plastic with fabric lining and metal fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

15. Lucite Handbag by Wilardy, 1950s.
Acrylic plastic (Lucite) with rhinestones and glitter, with metal fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

16. Plastic Handbag by Ilene, 1950s.
Plastic and glitter with metal fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

17. Day Bag, 1950s.
Plastic, lined with satin, with metal fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

18. Beauty Case, 1960s.
Fabric and leather, with metal fittings
On loan from the Jean Brown Archive

19. Photograph, 1931
Three women in evening gowns at a fashion parade
Negative number: 102522
John Oxley Library Collections

20. Photograph, 1934
Aviatrix Jean Batten behind the wheel of a car after her record breaking flight from England to Australia
Negative number: 22818
John Oxley Library Collection

21. Photograph, 1951
Strapless dress being modelled on a young woman at North Quay, Brisbane
Negative number: 181588
John Oxley Library Collection

22. Photograph, 1936
Myrtle Brannigan, an usherette at Wintergarden Theatre, Ipswich
Negative Number: 38965
John Oxley Library Collection

23. Photograph, 1936
Negative Number: 191046
John Oxley Library Collection

24. Photograph, 1951
Strapless dress being modelled on a young woman at North Quay, Brisbane
Negative number: 181588
John Oxley Library Collection

25. Photograph, 1968
Dress being modelled at the Rural Youth Dunlop modelling contest, Goondiwindi
Negative Number: 191043
John Oxley Library Collection

26. Photograph, 1967
Young woman turning heads in a miniskirt, Brisbane
Negative Number: 64511
John Oxley Library Collection

27. Photograph, 1930s
Model posing in a glamorous 1930s evening gown
Negative Number: 169574
John Oxley Library Collection

28. Photograph, 1939
Mrs. Andrew Crooke on the S.S. Orungal
Negative Number: 129121
John Oxley Library Collection

29. Photograph, 1930
Bridget O'Brien
Negative Number: 130122
John Oxley Library Collection

30. Photograph, 1920.
Miss Nancy Spry of Winton in a dramatic evening ensemble
Negative Number: 50372
John Oxley Library Collection

ii. Didactic Information

The Modern Woman

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a greater development of mass produced clothing, resulting in many women finding work in (often exploitative) factory environments. Ironically, this growing ready-to-wear industry also made fashion less expensive and widely available, thus allowing women a sense of greater freedom. As the 20th century progressed, women's careers expanded into modern environments such as office buildings and department stores. These changes created a demand for clothing and accessories to meet a new lifestyle in which work and recreation played a greater role. The handbags from this period reflect this change through practical inclusions such as self-contained mirrors, and came in a variety of sizes depending on whether it was time for work or play.

Exoticism

Ideas and images of 'exotic' cultures, originating from Asia and Africa, provided many artists and designers of the modernist era with a way of freeing their work from the perceived traditions and constraints of the West. In fashion, the trend towards exoticism was perhaps best exemplified through the work of Paul Poiret, whose use of opulent fabrics

and stunning colours evoked his taste for the vastly different cultures of the far-away locations that produced them. In handbag design, this trend for exoticism led to the inclusion of foreign scenes, like postcards, being turned into design features. Such bags act almost like souvenirs, as though the owner had visited the exotic location, even when the bag itself may have been designed and produced in the West. In the 1950s materials such as snake and alligator skin, which created unusual textures, were favoured. This even extended to the use of an entire (often rare) animal, whose body would create the shape of the bag itself. The Armadillo Bag from this time is perhaps the most unsettling example of the trend. Iconic European designer Elsa Schiaparelli, who was closely aligned to the Surrealists, utilised exotic materials such as entire sea shells with bold and strange results.

Handmade to Machine Made

Fashion is often defined through its inherent rejection of the old or traditional, constantly striving to be forever 'new.' This insatiable need for change and innovation is inextricably linked to the vast advances in technology during the modern age. Such technological developments produced innovation across all areas of design, including fashion. Consequently there was a greater production of previously specialised or artisan-based crafts, such as handmade mesh bags, which, in the 1920s, could now be machine made. Also common at this time were bags that featured industrial looking elements as part of the design. Innovation continued after the Second World War with the use of newly developed plastics in almost every aspect of daily life – including handbags. As the beaded dance bags of the 1920s and 30s embody the era known as the 'jazz age' so too, the plastic bags of the 1950s can be seen as reflective of a move toward 'space age' aesthetics, which continued into the 1960s and beyond. These designs remain iconic indicators of the modern era in which they were produced.

Abstract Forms

With many artists focussing on form, line and colour rather than attempting to depict reality, Abstraction became a dominant form of expression in art during the modernist era. Artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Jackson Pollock are seen as pioneers at various stages of Abstraction's history; their works using new methods to produce new outcomes in painting. The reach of Abstraction was vast, and the pursuit of abstract forms can be seen in other disciplines such as music and design. In fashion the influence of abstraction is clear in the bright colours, simplified silhouettes and geometric shapes that typify 1960s clothing and accessories. Prints of stripes and spots replace the dominant trend towards

decoration seen in the florals of the previous decade, and in handbag design there was a shift towards abstract forms, where blocks of colour emphasise clean lines and shapes. This trend of incorporating abstract form into design led to both practical and impractical results. While the brightly coloured make-up bag is sized for an abundance of products, the slim black and white handbag, while faithfully abstract, can fit little more than a very slim wallet inside.

iii. Images

1. Flyer for a public program relating to the exhibition, held during MBFF

2009.

Appendix B

Exhibition: *wearer/maker/wearer: recent work by Paula Dunlop*

Location: Queensland University of Technology Art Museum

Dates: 18th August – 13th September 2009

i. List of Objects/Exhibition Labels

1. Dunlop, Paula (b. 1979)
Shirt (remade vintage skirt)
Australia, 2009
Silk
Private collection

2. Dunlop, Paula (b. 1979)
Jacket (remade vintage kimono)
Australia, 2009
Hand-dyed rayon
Private collection

3. Dunlop, Paula (b. 1979)
Vest
Australia, 2009
Calico, silk
Private Collection

4. Dunlop, Paula (b. 1979)
Belt

Australia, 2009
Cotton
Private Collection

5. Dunlop, Paula (b. 1979)
Vest
Australia, 2009
Calico
Private Collection

6. Dunlop, Paula (b. 1979)
Dress (re-made vintage sari)
Australia, 2009
Silk
Private Collection

7. Dunlop, Paula (b. 1979)
Shirt
Australia, 2009
Cotton
Private Collection

8. Dunlop, Paula (b. 1979)
Dress (re-made vintage dress)
Australia, 2009
Rayon
Private Collection

9. Dunlop, Paula (b. 1979)
Collar (re-made vintage dress)
Australia, 2009
Polyester
Private Collection

10. Dunlop, Damian (b. 1974)
'Maddy'
Photograph
Australia, 2009
Private Collection

11. Dunlop, Damian (b. 1974)
'Carla'
Photograph
Australia, 2009
Private Collection

12. Dunlop, Damian (b. 1974)
'Marja'
Photograph
Australia, 2009
Private Collection

13. Dunlop, Damian (b. 1974)
'Svenja"
Photograph
Australia, 2009
Private Collection

14. Dunlop, Damian (b. 1974)
'Michelle'
Photograph
Australia, 2009
Private Collection

15. Dunlop, Damian (b. 1974)
'Matilda'
Photograph
Australia, 2009
Private Collection

16. Dunlop, Damian (b. 1974)
'Nadia'
Photograph
Australia, 2009
Private Collection

17. Dunlop, Damian (b. 1974)
'Paula'
Photograph
Australia, 2009
Private Collection

ii. Didactic Information

The fashion industry is characterised by mass production and rapid change. Designers are celebrated as creative visionaries whose collections are coveted and copied worldwide. A different history of design exists, however, through the home-made and re-made garments located within the everyday, domestic sphere. This is a predominantly feminine domain and its existence can be traced throughout specific historical periods, such as the 'make do and mend' campaign of the Second World War.

Re-making is thus a significant aspect of fashion history that disrupts neat definitions of design in which a sole author is privileged, and where a constant strive for the 'new' is questioned. The everyday making of clothing is often overlooked in both popular culture and fashion discourse,

but it is this form of 'fashion at the margins' that inspires Paula Dunlop's practice.

Making one-off pieces for a specific recipient, often by re-working existing vintage pieces, Dunlop's practice explores the relationship between the maker and the wearer in a way often neglected by the fashion industry. The images and garments contained in this exhibition highlight a collaboration between Dunlop and a chosen recipient (a close friend or family member) who each garment was made for. By 'handing-over' each garment to a specific person, Dunlop places as much emphasis on the gesture as on the garment itself. These items are literally given a new life, and to demonstrate this, each recipient was photographed wearing their garment. The photographs represent the inherent importance of the wearer within fashion; without a living body the garment is a lifeless object. As such, these images are prefaced in the exhibition layout.

Furthermore, clothes are signifiers of identity, a kind of self-portrait in themselves. In this equation, the revered design object becomes a part of the everyday life of the wearer, whose identity is considered throughout the process of making. All of this disrupts the impulses of 'originality' and 'newness' that supposedly define fashion; in Dunlop's practice the temporary becomes treasured.

iii. Images

The exhibition labels for this show were non-standard (they did not contain the conventional information) and were hand-written on to the gallery walls. They only contained the name of the garment's recipient or the photographic subject.

Figure 155. ***wearer/maker/wearer,*** **wall text, 2009.**

Figure 156. ***wearer/maker/wearer,*** **wall text, 2009**

Appendix C

Exhibition: *Imeldific! 20th Century Shoe Design*

Location: Jean Brown Gallery

Dates: 28th October – 29th November 2009

i. List of Objects/Exhibition Labels

1. Lace-up Boots, 1900s.

Black leather with leather laces and satin and canvas lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

2. Lace-up Boots with Louis Heel, 1900s.
Dark brown kidskin with leather lining and silk laces.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

3. Brown Suede Pumps with Louis Heel, 1910s.
Suede, leather and grosgrain ribbon.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

4. Silver Evening Shoes with T-strap by I.Miller, 1920s.

Embossed leather with button closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

5. Evening Sandals by Lord & Taylor, late 1920s.
Silk and leather with rhinestone buckle.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

6. Red Silk Dance Shoes, 1920s.
Silk with white kid lining and button closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

7. Black Silk Dance Shoes by Special Line, 1920s.
Silk with silk laces and glass bead detail.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

8. Walking Shoes by Thomas Cort, 1920s.
Brown leather, pressed and dyed to look like python.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

9. Colourful Silk Mules by Bonwit Teller, 1930s.
Silk satin with leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

10. Black and Gold Evening Sandals by I.Miller, 1930s.
Shantung silk and leather with rhinestone buckle.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

11. Black T-strap Pumps, 1930s.
Perforated and topstitched leather with buckle closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

12. White Leather and Suede Pumps by Styleez, 1930s.
Suede and leather with metal buckle closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

13. Brown Oxford Pumps, 1930s.
Embossed leather and suede with fabric laces and leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

14. Colourful Wedge Platforms, 1940s.
Dyed and pressed leather resembling python, fabric lining with metal buckle closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

15. Burgundy Peep-toe Pumps by David Evins, 1940s.

Snakeskin with leather lining and bow detail.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

16. Tan Snakeskin Sandals by Natural Tread Shoes, 1940s.
Snakeskin with leather lining and buckle closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

17. Black Open-toe Platform Shoes, 1940s.
Fabric with nail-head decoration and buckle closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

18. Patriotic Sling-back Platform Shoes by Andrew Geller, 1940s.
Blue linen with leather appliqués edged in nail heads, leather lined.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

19. Black Suede Open-back Platforms by Glamour Shoes, 1940s.
Suede with leather lining and buckle closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

20. Black and Ivory Platform Sandals by Carmelettes, 1940s.
Suede and snakeskin with leather lining and buckle closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

21. Black Platform Sandals by Laird Schoeber and Co, 1940s.
Suede, fabric and leather with nail stud decoration.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

22. Pink and Purple Platform Sandals by Naturalizers Deluxe.
Dyed kidskin leather with buckle closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

23. Floral Brocade Slippers by David Evins, 1950s.
Fabric, gold synthetic trim and leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

24. Black Scalloped Stilettos by Herbert Levine, 1950s.
Leather outer and lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

25. Purple Satin Stilettos by Herbert Levine, 1950s.
Silk satin with leather and fabric lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

26. Plastic and Gold Leather Stilettos by Di Romani, 1950s.
Leather and clear plastic with leather lining.

From the Jean Brown Archive.

27. Colourful Basket-weave Stilettos by Jacqueline, 1950s.
Woven leather with leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

28. Black Pointed-toe Pumps by Schiaparelli, 1950s.
Fabric and elastic with man-made lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

29. Sling-back Stilettos by Herbert Levine, 1950s.
Printed leather and velvet with buckle closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

30. Hand-painted Suede Stilettos by Delman, 1950s.
Suede with leather lining and rhinestones.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

40. Lavender, Turquoise and Green Slingbacks by Roger Vivier, 1950s.
Raw silk with bow detail and leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

41. Tan Lizardskin Pumps by Delman, early 1950s.
Leather and lizardskin.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

42. Blue T-strap Mary Janes by David Evins, 1960s.
Patent leather with alligator pattern, leather lining and metal buckles.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

43. Black Satin and Rhinestone Buckle pumps by Roger Vivier, 1960s.
Silk Satin with leather lining and rhinestones.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

44. Vara Pumps by Salvatore Ferragamo, 1960s.
Leather with grosgrain ribbon and metal buckle.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

45. Gold Pilgrim Slippers by Bally, 1960s.
Fabric with leather lining and rhinestone buckle.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

46. Beaded Evening Pumps by Gigi Shoes, 1960s.
Glass beads and leather with leather lining.

From the Jean Brown Archive.

47. Lime Green Pumps by Neiman Marcus, 1960s.
Leather outer and lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

48. Patent Pumps with Buckle by Life Stride, 1960s.
Patent vinyl with gold metal buckle.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

49. Sling-back Pumps by Grandini, 1960s.
Fabric with metallic detail and elastic strap, leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

50. Pink Platform Creepers by Super Nova, 1970s.
Patent leather with glitter, metal fittings and plastic sole.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

51. Wooden Sole Platforms by Frederick's of Hollywood, 1970s.
Leather and wood with metal buckle.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

52. Rollerskate Platforms by Omniac, 1970s.
Leather, metal and plastic.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

53. Wedge Platform Shoes by Edouard Jerrold, 1970s.
Suede with buckle closure.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

54. Yellow and Green Wedge Platform Shoes by Scordilis, 1970s.
Suede with metal studs and leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

55. Evening Sandals by Herbert Levine, 1970s.
Satin with leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

56. Sling-back Platforms by Charles Jourdan, 1970s.
Suede with leather lining and plastic sole.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

57. Gold Lamé and Vinyl Boots, 1970s.
Synthetic fabric and man-made vinyl.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

58. Green Suede Rhinestone Pumps by Stuart Weitzman, 1980s.
Suede with leather lining and rhinestones.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

59. Black Globe Heels by Yves Saint Laurent, late 1980s.
Fabric with leather lining and plastic heel.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

60. Patterned Pumps by Gianni Versace, 1980s.
Fabric with leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

61. Colourful Brocade Pumps by Razzamatazz, 1980s.
Embossed satin with leather and fabric lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

62. Satin Stilettos by Thierry Mugler, 1980s.
Satin with leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

63. Satin and Rhinestone Evening Pumps by Yves Saint Laurent, 1980s.
Satin with leather lining, topstitching and rhinestones.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

64. Soccer Ball Shoes by Casadei, 1980s.
Patent leather, metal fittings and leather lining.
From the Jean Brown Archive.

65. Floral Shoes with Matching Handbag by Charles Jourdan, early 1990s.
Embossed fabric with leather lining and satin lining (bag).
From the Jean Brown Archive.

66. Crystal Logo Sandal by Gucci, 1990s
Leather, metal and rhinestone crystals.
On Loan from Cindy Fleming.

67. Silver Heeled Platform Pumps by Karl Lagerfeld, 1990s.
Suede with leather lining and metal heel.
On Loan from Cindy Fleming.

68. Lucite Strappy Sandals by Stuart Weitzman, 1990s.
Plastic, leather and elastic.

From the Jean Brown Archive.

69. Boots by Doc Martens, 1990s.
Leather with rubber soles, metal fittings and top stitching.
On Loan from Annabel Shaw.

ii. Didactic Information

1900s

After the longest reign of any Monarch, Queen Victoria died in 1901, passing the throne to her son Edward. The subsequent Edwardian era, spanning from 1901–1910, was a period of immense social change that quickly overturned the conservative ideals of Queen Victoria's rule. It was also a period of artistic innovation and scientific breakthroughs: the first flight was taken by the Wright brothers in 1903, and Art Neaveau was at its peak. It was an era of greater mobility for women; many joined the suffragette movement and demonstrated publically on a scale never before seen for equal rights. An emphasis on walking, particularly among the busy streets of modern cities such as London and New York, meant that practicality and durability were fundamental to footwear. This was in stark contrast to previous decades, where small, narrow feet were prized as symbols of gentility and femininity, with women often wearing shoes several sizes too small to achieve the desired effect.

By contrast, women's shoe designs in the 1900s began copying masculine styles, and the comfortable, hard-wearing boot was the dominant design of the early twentieth century. Shoes remained hidden under the long hemlines of the time and colours were generally limited to black, brown or white, with a low 'Louis' heel. While previously custom-made, mechanised production began to grow rapidly—particularly in North America—and shoes became more affordable.

1910s

Change continued as the twentieth century progressed, especially for women. The term 'New Woman' is often used to describe the impact of modernity in women's lives, from work to play to fashion. While women gained greater social freedoms in the Edwardian era, the clothing silhouette remained largely restrictive; women were swathed in layers of heavy fabric and bound in corsets. French fashion designer Paul Poiret was extremely influential in changing the Edwardian silhouette in the first and second decades of the twentieth century, until closing his fashon house to serve in the First World War. The shapes he created were shorter and straighter than ever before and the foot became a highly visible part of the body. Poiret favoured colour and embellishment, influenced by the 'exotic' cultures of the East. He comissioned Andre Perugia to design shoes to compliment his decadent aesthetic. Women's shoes became a key feature of an outfit, with bows, beading and buckles an important visual statement.

As the decade progressed, the war brought rationing and opulent styles were replaced, while hemlines continued to rise. A variety of materials were required to create new designs and the two tone 'spectator' shoe, made from leather and canvas, was born. Sporting activities such as bicycling and yachting and an emphasis on a 'healthy lifestyle' led to the invention of the first pair of rubber soled shoes, dubbed 'sneakers' in 1916, made by Keds.

1920s

The shoes of the 1920s display the influence of modernism, the jazz age and a continued fascination with 'exotic' cultures. The discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922 brought a wave of Egyptian colours and motifs to fashion design, with frills and filigree buckles on shoes replaced by simplified shapes and patterns. Rich colours of red, gold and silver were popular and the impact of new, energetic dances such as the Charleston could be felt in the changing shoe silhouette. Bar straps, and T-straps held the foot securely in place,

while higher heels showed off the new, lean silhouette of the 'flapper'. A short and close fitting straight dress and cloche hat led to an overall modern and streamlined effect; the body was more visible than ever, and these new fashions were labelled 'risqué' by conservative onlookers.

The legacy of Poiret, no longer designing, continued in the work of Madeleine Vionnet and Coco Chanel, whose youthful and sporty silhouette rejected opulent luxury in favour of understated elegance.

Manufacturing processes continued to expand and improve, with shoes becoming cheaper and more widely available accessories. This meant a woman could purchase shoes based entirely on their visual impact, or to go with a single outfit, rather than being affected by previous concerns of practicality or durability.

1930s

The 'Roaring Twenties' came to an abrupt end in October of 1929, when the catastrophic Wall Street crash triggered the beginning of the Great Depression. America was now a country divided in half between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', with many losing their jobs and previously prosperous lifestyles. At the same time, a new era of Hollywood films provided a sense of escape through alluring leading men and women portraying lives of glittering fantasy on the big screen. Stars such as Jean Harlow became the new celebrities, and the clothes and shoes they wore sparked a new silhouette imbued with glamour.

Clothes were cut close to the body, with the influence of Vionnet's innovative bias cut of the 1920s taken up in the on-screen designs of Hollywood costumier Adrian. A pair of colourful silk mules were the perfect accessory to compliment a form fitting, liquid satin gown. Innovation became the driving force behind iconic shoe designers such as Salvatore Ferragamo, who is often credited with creating the platform sole, and who made fantastical footwear for Hollywood stars such as Judy Garland.

While fantasy continued on screen, women again needed practical day-time shoes that would last under

the strain of economic hardship and leather shortages. Simple designs such as sturdy-heeled lace-up oxfords were especially popular at this time.

1940s

The glamour of the 1930s became impossible to maintain when World War II officially broke out in 1939. Rationing, already a reality in many people's lives due to the Great Depression, became more pronounced during the war as economy and austerity became fundamental to daily life. Fabric rationing meant hemlines sat at or just below the knee, and women predominantly wore a suit in a hard-wearing fabric such as wool. In shoe design the platform continued to be popular, with soles being resourcefully decorated with metal studs; often nail-heads. Slingbacks and peep-toes became common styles, and colours often illustrated patriotism, such as this pair of red, white and blue linen sandals.

An iconic shoe style of the era was born out of desperation, when steel shortages were imposed on Italians after the Italo-Ethiopian war. Struggling with producing arch supports for his shoes without steel, Ferragamo invented a new version of the platform heel, filling in the space between the front and back sections of the sole using cork. The wedge was born. As materials became more difficult to source throughout WWII, the wedge became an enduring style that supplied a perfect solution; it provided fashionable height for women while also acting as a functional work shoe.

For wealthy women, beautifully coloured leather platform heels were still available and remained the height of fashion, but greater resourcefulness with materials remained a priority for most. Snakeskin offered a great alternative to softer leathers such as kid, which was harder to find during the war.

1950s

With the end of WWII, and the launch of Christian Dior's famous 'New Look' in 1947, the chunkier styles associated with the 1940s were quickly changing. By the 1950s an entirely different silhouette was evident in both clothing and shoe styles. While women filled men's roles during the war, this equality was quickly replaced by a return to traditional roles with the war's end; women were portrayed as overtly feminine housewives, dutifully serving their husbands in frocks and high heeled shoes.

While the feminine fashion ideal of the 1950s can be linked to inequality, it was also a celebration after a long period of austerity. Expensive fabrics, longer, fuller hemlines and new shoe styles preoccupied the minds of designers like David Evins and Beth and Herbert Levine. If the thick, practical heel of the 1940s was out, then a new, narrower and higher heel was the quest of the decade.

Heels had previously been made of solid wood, which relied on thickness for its strength, but designers such as Dior, whose shoe designer was Roger Vivier, wanted a higher, thinner heel to compliment his designs. Definite origins of the stiletto remain unclear, but four inch examples by Vivier and Andre Perugia exist from the very early 1950s. Charles Jourdan, Salvatore Ferragamo and Herbert and Beth Levine all created their own versions. *Vogue* was the first to use the term 'stiletto' to describe these shoes. Such new heights meant that new materials, such as steel and aluminium were used to create heels that were stronger and thinner than had ever been seen before.

1960s

Christian Dior died in 1957, ten years after unveiling his iconic 'New Look'. In a sense it was the end of an era. The elegant, wealthy and mature woman of the 1950s was replaced by a new style and beauty ideal which changed the direction of fashion. Boutiques, rather than department stores, became the place to find the latest fashion and Mary Quant opened her first store, Bazaar, on King's Road in London. The girl, rather than the woman, became the icon of the decade,

epitomised by the slender 'dolly bird' look of Twiggy, the most famous model of the 1960s.

The extreme height and pointed toe of the 1950s stiletto was no longer desirable. Initially the stiletto was replaced by the kitten heel—a much lower version—however as the decade progressed the thin heel was replaced by a lower, thicker heel, and the pointed toe was turned into a round or square toe; feet were comfortable again. Stilettos can still be found from this era, as many older women still felt this was the most appropriate style.

In the early 1960s a new shoe design was born to satisfy both tastes. Roger Vivier is credited with the creation of the famous 'pilgrim pump' in the mid-1960s, and an early version of Vivier's design can be seen here. The style was immediately popular and countless designers began experimenting with colour and buckle combinations in bright colours. Other popular styles of the decade were mary-janes and the 'Vara' pump, an iconic design from Salvatore Ferragamo's heir, his daughter Fiamma, which is still in production today.

1970s

After the fairly strict style codes of previous decades, the 1970s opened up an entirely different 'anything goes' approach to fashion. A woman could adopt the Hippie style, still popular and politically important after the 1960s, or choose the glitter and glam of the disco scene. Nostalgia was a key feature of the 1970s, with fashion and shoe styles influenced by earlier designs, particularly those of the 1930s and 40s. The desire for the past is most clearly seen in the design houses of Biba and Yves Saint Laurent at this time. While influenced by history, these new interpretations of older styles became exaggerated and altered in different ways. For instance, the platform heel was revived, though it was higher and chunkier than before, with outrageous colours and materials being used to create new effects. The 'creeper', which originated post WWII, received a punk glam facelift and was sold by Malcolm McLaren in his infamous 'Let it Rock' boutique in London.

Natural materials were also important, with wooden clogs becoming a mainstay of most women's wardrobes. The clog-skate was a brief but notable design innovation that took place in the late 1970s; it combined two major 1970s trends, roller-skating and wooden clogs. At first glance it appears to simply be a low clog sandal, but with the push of a button (located on the side of the shoe) wheels are lowered and the wearer has a pair of roller-skates. This trend was brief, but an example of these interesting shoes is included in this exhibition.

1980s

While the 1970s had represented an era of multiple forms of expression, the 1980s was much more geared towards a single fashion goal; conspicuous consumption. Old fashion houses such as Louis Vuitton and Chanel were revitalised when new, young designers took up the helm and—buoyed by the decade's economic boom—were once again highly coveted symbols of success. Excess in all forms was encouraged and bright colours, high heels and embellishments were once again significant shoe design elements; no colour combination was too vulgar, no level of decoration too much.

The 1980s also saw the rise of 'Baby Boomers' in the work force, succeeding at high levels and holding positions of power. Women in particular had fought hard to climb the corporate ladder in the wake of second wave feminism to take their rightful place beside men. This new environment required a look that represented their positions. 'Power dressing' is a term often used to describe the new business of style for women who wanted to be taken seriously in the workplace. Shoulder pads were revived, having performed a similar function in the 1940s when women were required to fill men's roles, but in the 1980s they became highly exaggerated. Women didn't want to look like men, however, and accessories became increasingly important sites of outrageousness. Shoes were matched with bags, heels reached new heights and designers such as Stuart

Weitzman and Charles Jourdan satisfied the consumer's desire for luxury.

1990s

A counter point to the excess of the 1980s can be found in the grunge aesthetic that infiltrated fashion via Marc Jacobs' infamous collection for Perry Ellis in 1993. Courtney Love, in retro floral dresses, red lipstick and a pair of well-worn Doc Martens boots epitomised this look; it was immediately imitated, and while Jacobs was fired, he went on to become one of the most influential designers of the late twentieth, and early twenty-first centuries.

Grunge, like Punk before it, was inherently linked to the music scene and was especially popular among youth subcultures. A different aesthetic, particularly in accessories design, was beginning to emerge. The stiletto heel again resurfaced as a hugely popular style, and women were more prepared than ever to spend money on designer versions. One of the most visible examples of this trend can be linked to *Sex and the City*, and Carrie Bradshaw's insatiable love of top shoe designers such as Jimmy Choo and Manolo Blahnik, despite the price tag. Tom Ford, designing for Gucci, also presented some of the decade's most dangerous looking spike heels, adored by women the world over.

In 1993, at the height of her supermodel fame, Naomi Campbell tripped and fell on the catwalk in a pair of Vivienne Westwood platform heels, whose extreme 10 inch height perfectly symbolised the 'no pain, no gain' ethos behind so many shoe designs of the decade.

Appendix D

Exhibition: *Material Memories: restaging the eCHO project*

Location: QUT Art Museum

Dates: 13th July – 22nd August, 2010

i. List of Objects/Exhibition Labels

1. Akira Isogawa (b.1964)
Ensemble (re-made from 19th Century garments)
Australia, 2003
Silk, velvet, brocade, metallic thread
Private Collection

2. Toni Maticevski (b. 1977)
Dress (re-made from 19th Century garments)
Australia, 2003
Cotton, ribbon lace, netting
Queensland University of Technology

3. Easton Pearson (founded 1988)
Dress (re-made from 19th century garments)
Australia, 2003
Cotton
Queensland University of Technology

4. Daniel Lightfoot (b.1964)
Dress (re-made from 19th century garments)
Australia, 2003
Silk, lace, cotton ribbon, organza
Queensland University of Technology

5. Suzi Vaughan & Wendy Armstrong (b. ?)
Coat (re-made from 19th century garments)
Australia 2003
Silk, elastic
Queensland University of Technology

6. Susan Dimasi (b. ?)
Coat dress
Australia 2003
Vinyl, canvas, plastic
Queensland University of Technology

7. Margo Barton (b. ?)
Bonnets
New Zealand, 2003
Perspex, printing ink, grosgrain ribbon
Private Collection

8. Sara Thorn (b. ?)
Ensemble (partially re-made from 19th century garments)
Australia, 2003
Silk, boning, netting, ink
Queensland University of Technology

9. Sarah Hill (b. ?)
Bodice (partially re-made from 19th century garments)
Australia 2003Porcelain
Silk, boning, chain-mail
Queensland University of Technology

10 – 12. Hannah Gartside (b. 1987)
Dolls (re-made from 19th century dolls and garments)
Australia, 2003

Porcelain, silk, cotton, leather, netting
Private Collection

13 - 21. Selection of garments
Men's shirts, Vest, Nightgown, Bodice, Dress, Jacket, Christening gown
Australia, 1850-1910
Cotton, silk
Queensland University of Technology

22 – 30. Selection of photographs
United States, United Kingdom, 1850 – 1900
Private Collection

ii. Didactic Information

Museum fashion exhibitions generally present garments with a certain type of historical value: the "best example" of a particular period, or the work of a significant designer. As viewers we expect to see the best examples–across all media—on display when we enter a museum. While this is an important function of the museum, what this selection often lacks is the countless other histories that the neglected objects contain. In a sense, these histories are secret; they are usually not recorded and often become lost forever. In the case of fashion, it could be said that these secret histories are stored in the creases, marks and scents of clothes left behind.

The following exhibition explores such histories through the re-staging of a unique collaborative project called eCHO, which took place in 2003. eCHO partnered international researchers, QUT students, and key Australian fashion designers with a collection of garments that were gifted to QUT fashion by the National Trust, dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These garments weren't of museum quality; many were damaged, had no locatable origin, and were considered beyond repair by conservators. As such, they were given another life by being re-worked into 'new' garments and displayed through a live performance. Seven years later, some of these garments remain together in a small collection at QUT. The current exhibition is the first time that they have been displayed in a static gallery space, with the intention of inviting careful and close consideration of their materiality and showing the dialogue between

their past and present forms. This exhibition also reveals several remaining garments from the original National Trust donation that were never re-worked. The following installation seeks to reveal and explore the hidden memories, lives and histories of these garments.

iii. Images

Figure 157. ***Material Memories: restaging the eCHO project*****, hand-made labels and props, 2010.**

Figure 158. Material *Memories: restaging the eCHO project*, garments in storage, 2010.

Figure 159. *Material Memories: restaging the eCHO project*, exhibition install, 2010.

Figure 160. ***Material Memories: restaging the eCHO project*****, exhibition install, 2010.**

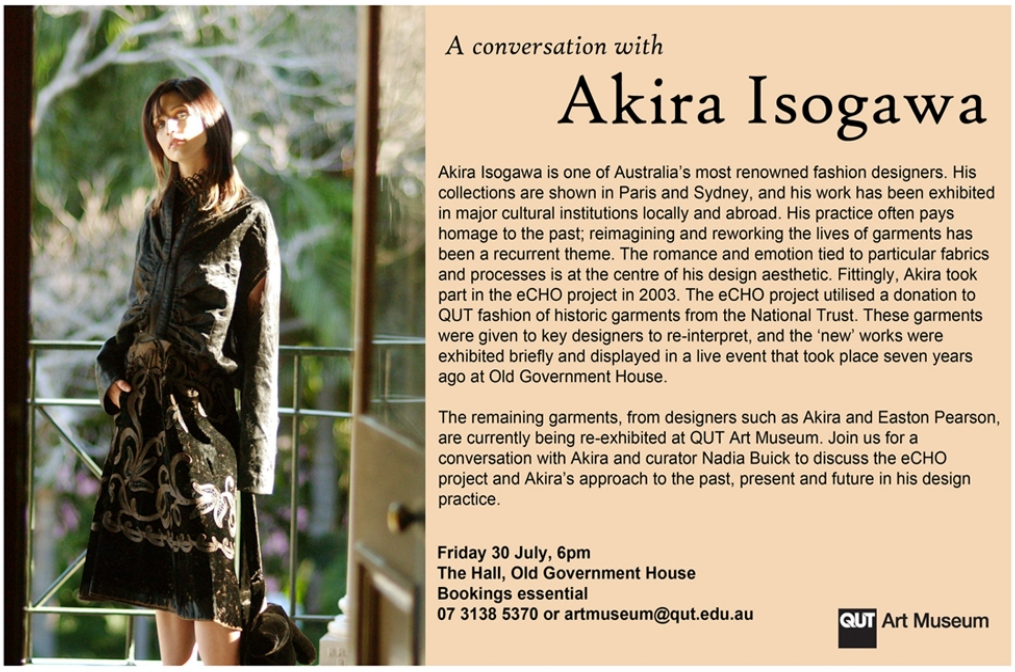

Figure 161. A Conversation with Akira Isogawa, QUT Art Museum, 2010.

Appendix E

Exhibition: *Dreaming of Chanel*
Location: QUT Art Museum, Brisbane
Dates: 26th August – 16th October, 2011

i. List of Objects/Exhibition Labels

The exhibition labels for *Dreaming of Chanel* were arranged on a floor-sheet, rather than mounted beside each object. This was designed to enable the viewer to read each garment's story (from the Dreaming of Chanel book) at their own pace. Each object had a small number placed beside it in the exhibition space. This corresponded with a number on the floor-sheet that contained the standard museum label information (artist, date, materials etc.) along with the story for each object.

Room 1. "A History of Women"

1. Barbara Coty
Dress (Graduation)
Australia, 1951
Silk with painted polka dots
The Darnell Collection

"By the early 1950s Christian Dior's 'New Look' had taken the world by storm, and the little country town of Canowindra in New South Wales was no exception… After joining the weekly sewing circle at the church hall, Barbara Coty proved to be so gifted that she won a scholarship to East Sydney Technology College. Barbara hand-painted polka dots on this gloriously frothy silk confection she made to wear to her graduation ball in 1951."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 24

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

2. Dress
United States, 1920-29
Lace, cotton voile
The Darnell Collection

"In the 1920s Mary Edgar Blood majored in Greek and Latin at New York's Cornell University… A passionate supporter of the underdog, she was a committed human-rights activist and campaigner for women's suffrage… One day Mary came out of her house to find people marching down her street in a procession she assumed was a protest march. Mary was enjoying herself until she discovered that she was marching in Al Capone's funeral procession. She ducked out and made a quick getaway."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 60

3. David Jones (founded 1838)
Ensemble
Australia, 1970-73
Polyester
The Darnell Collection

"Any woman who can pull off a bold red, white and blue printed and flared polyester pantsuit like this would surely have had front row seats at the Astrodome in Houston on the 20th of September, 1973. It was standing room only for the 'Battle of the Sexes' between tennis champ and notorious male chauvinist, Bobby Riggs, and women's world champion, Billie Jean King… It was a big day for women's lib, with 30-year-old Billie Jean cleaning the floor with her 55-year-old opponent."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 64

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

4. Hardy Amies (founded 1946) Ensemble
United Kingdom, 1970-79
Linen
The Darnell Collection

"Judith was a spunky, lively woman, ever resilient, and had a strong sense of what was right and wrong. Doris recalls her friend showing these qualities during an extremely difficult time in her life, when Judith was suing the university where she had worked for twenty years for age discrimination. Despite a formidable and well-resourced opposition, Judith was determined that justice would prevail and she would win her case. And in the end she did."
Dreaming of Chanel p.118

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

5. Dress (Graduation)
United States, 1930-39
Taffeta with velvet trim
The Darnell Collection

"When Quaker Anna Aubrey wore this pink plaid silk taffeta dress to her graduation ball in the 1930s, it could not have been more different to her mother's graduation gown. As it was the middle of the Depression, Anna's mother had made her daughter's dress herself from a bolt of taffeta she had been saving for years, waiting for the right moment to use it."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 220

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

6. Dress (Evening)
United States, ca.1915
Lace, silk
The Darnell Collection

"This dress represented an important turning point in Lucy's life because she wore it to an historic gathering of women at the Hague Conference in 1915. The Congress of Women called together hundreds of American and European women from twelve countries to try to stop the slaughter of the First World War. Many of their initiatives were later embodied in President Wilson's Fourteen Points and led to the formation of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in 1919."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 274

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

7. Dress
United States, 1920-29
Silk, satin, glass beads
The Darnell Collection

"In the 1920s Edith Dewees and her sister Alice were determined to venture where no woman had gone before on their overseas travels… When the sisters arrived in Vienna, they decided to splurge on a room at the best hotel in town… But they were rudely awakened at six o'clock the next morning by a highly indignant concierge... He told his guests in no uncertain terms that it was 'an outrage' that such a prestigious hotel had underwear hanging on the balcony and to remove it at once. Secretly delighted that they had caused a scandal, the girls fought to stifle an attack of the

giggles as they retrieved their clean – and perfectly aired – clothes."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 112

8. Dress
United States, 1880-89
Wool, Mother of Pearl
The Darnell Collection

"In 1880 young Anna Mae Dubell lived with her parents in a gracious plantation house, surrounded by white post and rail fences, near Gettysburg… Unlike her rich Yankee cousins who wore brocaded silk bustle dresses and extravagant matching bonnets, Anna Mae preferred wearing printed cottons and embroidered wools, with the simplest of straw hats."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 258

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

9. Riding Suit
United Kingdom, 1890-1900
Wool
The Darnell Collection

"Born and bred in the English countryside, Ida Heaton lived to ride with the hounds, one of the more energetic highlights of a gentlewoman's social calendar at the turn of the twentieth century. An accomplished equestrian, Ida had to be even more adept than her male counterparts at handling the rough terrain and negotiating jumps, because, in accordance with the decorum of the times, she had to ride side-saddle."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 86

Room 2. "F is for Fashion"

10. Christian Dior New York, (founded 1948)
Marc Bohan (b. 1926)
Suit
France, United States, 1960-69
Wool, metal
The Darnell Collection

"My mother was in an utter quandary about what to wear when she received an invitation to dine with the captain of the QEII… Deciding to err on the safe side, Mum put on her beloved 1960s classic navy blue Dior suit. Because, as every woman knows, you can't go wrong in Dior."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 44

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

11. Vivienne Westwood (b.1941)
Ensemble
United Kingdom, ca.1990
Wool, velvet, tulle
The Darnell Collection

"From injecting punk into fashion in the 1970s with then-partner Malcolm McLaren of Sex Pistols fame to being honoured with an OBE, Vivienne Westwood is a true original. And trying to categorise Vivienne Westwood's designs is, as she herself once said, like trying to get a ship into a bottle… Once described as 'Marie Antoinette meets the power suit' this 1990s bodice and skirt is a classic example."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 52

12. Mary Quant (b.1934)
Leotard
United Kingdom, 1964-69
Nylon
The Darnell Collection

"From her Bazaar boutique on Kings Road, London, Mary Quant developed the 'Chelsea Look' that turned her signature daisy label into the grooviest of groovy brands for young fashionistas in the mid-1960s. Chelsea girl Daisy Fellowes was a devoted Mary Quant fan… and loved this mod tie-dye leotard because it was 'so very Mary Quant.'"

Dreaming of Chanel p. 186

Illustration by Grant Cowan,
watercolour and pencil on paper.

13. Jean Muir (1928-1995)
Dress
United Kingdom, 1970-79
Silk Jersey
The Darnell Collection

"Wendy Batson was strolling down Kensington High Street in London when the sight of this distinctive 1970s Jean Muir dress in a thrift shop window stopped her in her tracks… she just had to buy it for her friend Doris. All these years later anything from the 1970s is decidedly vintage and sought after. And, as Jean Muir couture is hard to find, this dress has become one of the collection's most popular and valuable pieces."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 102

14. Akira (founded 1993)
Akira Isogawa (b.1964)
Ensemble
Australia, ca.2007
Wool, felted wool
The Darnell Collection

"This spectacular ensemble is the result of three Australian icons meeting in an unforgettable fashion moment… Akira Isogawa was commissioned by Australian Wool Innovations to create a garment celebrating Australian Merino Wool. In turn, Akira drew his inspiration from the work of another iconic Australian designer, Florence Broadhurst… This outfit is a celebration of both how versatile wool is and how effectively Australian designers like Akira fuse so many cultures and influences to create unique fashion stories of their own."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 174

15. Coat (Opera)
France, ca.1903
Wool, silk
The Darnell Collection

"Any night at the Metropolitan Opera is a glittering event… but a performance by the legendary Enrico Caruso presented New York's high society ladies with a solid gold opportunity to parade their most elaborate new ensembles. In the audience, Elizabeth Hosking watched from one of the best seats in the house… Elizabeth knew that she would be on show, and in this spectacular embroidered wool opera coat, just arrived from Paris, her performance was pitch-perfect."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 280

16. Ceil Chapman (1912-79)
Cocktail Dress
United States, 1950-59
Silk brocade and Mink fur
The Darnell Collection

"Whenever Ethel Gilmore wore this sensational 1950s Ceil Chapman dress with its brown mink fur collar… she felt a little like a film star. Little wonder as the creator of this coffee cream silk brocade outfit was reputedly adored by Hollywood actresses from Marilyn Monroe to Elizabeth Taylor for the highly engineered fit of her fabulous gowns."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 284

Illustration by Grant Cowan,
watercolour and pencil on paper.

17. Dress
France, ca.1940
Silk, velvet
The Darnell Collection

"Those who could not join the Resistance fighters during the Second World War, or fight on the front line found other ways to show their patriotism. Some, like the woman who wore this 1940s black silk dress, chose fashion as their voice. The dress has velvet fleur de lys appliquéd all over it, declaring subtly but proudly her love for France. I like to

imagine this woman smoking a cigarette at a party, the picture of casual elegance, knowing her message to her countryman was written all over her."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 210

18. Zandra Rhodes (b.1940)
Dress
United Kingdom, ca.1983
Printed nylon with lurex threads, silk, faux pearls, diamantes, silk cord
The Darnell Collection

"The first 'princess of punk,' Zandra Rhodes's early passion was textile design but her bold prints were considered far too outrageous by conservative British manufacturers. Undeterred, she opened her own store in West London in 1969… For this striking 1980s dress, Zandra combined contemporary art with Chinese traditions… it was part of a collection she called 'Chinese Constructivism.'"
Dreaming of Chanel p. 166

19. Emilio Pucci (1914-92)
Skirt
Italy, 1960-68
Silk
The Darnell Collection

"In the 1960s the 'youthquake' movement in fashion and music in London was reverberating around the world. Those with a little more cash to splash embraced the bold and wildly colourful prints of Italian designer Emilio Pucci. Pucci's haute couture headquarters on the Isle of Capri helped establish him as a darling of the international jetset… Tanned, beautiful people flocked there, everyone from Marilyn Monroe and Sophia Loren to Jackie Kennedy."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 28

20. Dress
United States, 1966-69
Paper and polyester blend
The Darnell Collection

"Of all the fashions of the 1960s, the paper dress was not meant to be taken seriously… But when half a million women flocked to buy the paper dress and the fashion world caught on, an exciting new trend was born. Delores Brooks loved the idea of being able to afford a whole new wardrobe in the coolest new prints… The inevitable limitations of clothing that ripped or disintegrated ended the reign of the paper dress... But this dress is a reminder of the 1960s, when Delores was not the only one willing to embrace something new and different."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 96

21. Dress
United States, 1900-09
Cotton
The Darnell Collection

"In Edwardian times, wearing all white was not only considered the height of fashion, but a reflection of a lady's wealth and social standing. Socialite Edith Rodman boasted an entire wardrobe of what became known as Edwardian Whites… her favourite was this day dress with dramatic cutwork on the skirt, a masterpiece that took one seamstress more than six months to create."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 18

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

22. House of Chanel (founded 1913)
Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel (1883–1971)
Wedding Dress
France, 1937
Silk, lace
The Darnell Collection

"For most of us, dreaming of owning a Chanel original is as good as it gets. But for Anne, the daughter of a wealthy Boston family, her dream came true in

1937 in the form of a wedding gown custom made for her by Chanel… Friends of the Bouviers and Kennedys, Anne may have moved in a glittering circle but a Chanel wedding dress, especially one as spectacular as this, would have still made her friends green with envy."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 146

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

23. James Galanos (b.1924)
Dress (Evening)
United States, 1950-60
Wool and lace
The Darnell Collection

"Ruth Epstein loved her James Galanos dress because it was both versatile and simple. Made from wool crepe, rather than expensive silk or velvet, she felt her Galanos dress was suitably understated... But in the case of someone like Ruth, it didn't matter how simply she dressed, she always looked magnificent."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 182

Room 3. "Things I Treasure"

24. Dress (Evening)
United States, 1920-29
Silk, chiffon, glass beads
The Darnell Collection

"Inheriting a priceless vintage clothing collection from my American godmother Doris Darnell was unexpected, exciting and downright scary… But the day I pulled back the packing tape on the first box and gingerly lifted out the first dress… Gossamer silk, covered in glittering silver and white glass beads… I was enchanted, as Doris knew I would be."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 8

25. Dress
United Kingdom, 1949-51
Taffeta, velvet
The Darnell Collection

"Trawling through the treasures in my mother's writing desk one day, my daughter Olivia discovered a grand invitation tucked between two black and white photographs. It read: The Lord Chamberlain is commanded by Their Majesties to summon Miss Margaret Stafford to an afternoon presentation tea party at Buckingham Palace. The photographs showed my mother dressed in an elegant silver and black striped dress… she looked so sophisticated and yet so very young."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 32

26. Cape
United States, 1920-25
Velvet, lamé
The Darnell Collection

"This 1920s silver lame and velvet cape is one of those spectacular pieces that makes you wish you could travel back to a more glamorous age. Along with this divine cape, Doris was given a wardrobe of fabulous flapper fashions like this by the son of their original stylish owner, Mary Elizabeth. His mother's cape went on to star in Doris's shows all over the world"
Dreaming of Chanel p. 216

27. Ivy Spooner
Wedding Dress
Australia, ca.1950
Lace, taffeta, tulle, net
The Darnell Collection

"Every girl in Toowoomba and Sydney in the 1940s and 1950s knew there was only one dressmaker to go to if you wanted an unforgettable wedding dress… Ivy Spooner. When one very special customer came to her she knew this had to be the best one yet. She was quietly pleased the dress needed eight yards of lace, six yards of taffeta eleven

yards of tulle and ten yards of net… Her niece Annette deserved nothing less."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 282

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

28. Dress
United Kingdom, ca.1971
Cotton
The Darnell Collection

"I feel blessed to have had two fairy godmothers. My American godmother, Doris, changed my life by leaving me her priceless vintage collection. My English 'Auntie' Jill gave me another precious gift by teaching me the true meaning of hospitality. My most vivid memories of her are of the long dresses she wore with big picture hats, presiding graciously over garden parties… All the vegetables and fruit had come from her garden behind the house."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 206

29. Dress
United States, 1920-29
Silk Organdie
The Darnell Collection

"When Eleanor was invited to attend her first big party, her mother resolved to buy something suitably demure on their next trip to town. Eleanor had other ideas. She was determined to wear a 'proper' party dress… finally her mother relented and bought her this divine princess-like ice blue party dress… From that day on Eleanor never lowered her standards when it came to party dresses – and was always the belle of the ball"
Dreaming of Chanel p. 224

30. Caftan
United States, 1970-79
Silk
The Darnell Collection

"On hot and humid days in Palm Beach when only something flowing and light would do, Sidney Kendall loved to wear this silk batik caftan printed with butterflies… Renowned for her forthright nature, Sidney was one of my godmother's favourite people. This divine 1970s classic was one of the many generous gifts Sidney gave Doris."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 106

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

31. Dress (Evening)
United States, 1900 – 1910
Silk satin, lace
The Darnell Collection

"Annie Burnham loved to paint and was inspired by the pre-Raphaelite pleasure in detail, not only in her art but also in her choice of heavenly gowns… Made of the finest lawn, printed cotton or gossamer silk, often featuring delicate lace panels and satin bows, her Edwardian dresses were works of art in themselves."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 164

32. Hanae Mori (b.1926)
Dress (Evening)
Japan, 1960-1970
Velvet, silk, glass beads
The Darnell Collection

"Having spent more than forty years as an advisor to New York's Japan Society, Mary Eijima was a great supporter of all things Japanese. She especially loved clothes by Japanese couturier Hanae Mori… Hanae Mori was the first Japanese woman to present her collections on the runways of Paris and New York, and to have her fashion house admitted as an official haute couture design house by France's Fédération Française de la Couture."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 110

33. Ceil Chapman (1912-79)
Dress (Evening)
United States, 1940-50
Lace, silk, horsehair
The Darnell Collection

"It takes a woman of style and substance to pull a dress like this off and Imogen Mason had those qualities in spades… Apart from having peerless taste in clothes, Imogen had created a beautiful home, adored her husband, and was always there with a comforting hug or reassuring word when her children needed her. But as her good friend Doris observed, while Imogen was the perfect homemaker, she was no homebody. Certainly no one wearing a dress like this could ever be accused of that."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 160

34. House of Chanel (founded 1913)
Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel (1883–1971)
Suit
France, ca.1960
Wool, silk, metal
The Darnell Collection

"All my life I have dreamed of owning a Chanel suit. While a new Chanel suit was way out of my league, vintage was another story. I found my dream online in America… Now I just had to fight for it at auction – at three o'clock in the morning! Suddenly the phone rings… my heart pounds as I join the frenzy of bidding and then an eternity seems to pass before the hammer bangs down and the auctioneer exclaims: 'Sold to Miss Down Under!' At last, my very own Chanel."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 10

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

35. Dress (Evening)
United States, 1950-59
Tulle, silk, sequins
The Darnell Collection

"Toppy was the apple of her son's eye. Her real name was Margaret, but Sam always called her Toppy – the reason has long been forgotten but everyone remembered her for her larger than life personality and generosity… Toppy always looked wonderful but this 1950s party dress was Sam's favourite. Swathed in champagne-coloured tulle and sparkling sequins, his mother looked as if she could make magic happen – and invariably she did."
Dreaming of Chanel p.70

Room 4. "Love Stories"

36. Peignoir
United States, ca.1910
Cotton, lace
The Darnell Collection

"Kate Ludwig was a sought-after professional dressmaker who worked from home in Pennsylvania in the early 1900s. Every lady in town knew that if she wanted a dream wedding dress and trousseau, she needed to call on 'Miss Ludwig.' When it was finally Kate's turn, for the year leading up to her wedding, she spent every spare moment handstitching and embroidering her wedding dress and a trousseau, full of gowns, petticoats and piegnoirs like this… Tragically, Kate never had the opportunity to show hers off because the day before her wedding her fiancé jilted her, announcing that he had fallen in love with someone else."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 36

37. Dress
United States, 1900-1910
Cotton
The Darnell Collection

"This Edwardian dress belonged to Yuko, whose parents worked as servants for a wealthy Maine industrialist… When Yuko's parents decided to return to Japan, their employers asked if they could adopt Yuko. Her parents were torn but relented because the family loved Yuko like a daughter and could offer her more than they ever dreamed

possible. Soon after she married though, tragedy struck when her young husband died suddenly… It wasn't until Yuko met writer Simon that she decided to remarry. Many years later when Yuko died, Simon created a tranquil garden he called Yuko Park in memory of the woman he adored."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 94

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

38. Cocktail Dress
United States, 1950-1960
Silk
The Darnell Collection

"After one of my godmother's popular 'living fashion' talks, a man turned up on her doorstep with a mysterious parcel tucked under his arm. Doris never forgot what he said when he handed over the package: 'I have been holding on to this dress, which my wife adored, ever since she died… She loved this dress and I loved her in this dress.' Doris would always refer to it as her 'out of the blue' dress for the way it – and its sweet love story – came to her."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 138

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

39. Dress
United States, 1900-1910
Cotton voile, velvet
The Darnell Collection

"Kathryn James fell in love with William Bernard when they were both students at Harvard University in the early 1900s. All the most romantic moments of their courting days would come rushing back to Kathryn whenever she took out this floaty chiffon dress – picnics, garden parties, long carefree walks, not to mention William proposing… They enjoyed a long and happy marriage. In the last weeks of her life, Kathryn wrote love poems to William and hid them in the books beside her bed."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 142

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

40. Dress
Label reads 'Dandre Gowns'
Australia, 1950-59
Cotton, seersucker
The Darnell Collection

"Jennifer Johnson described this 1950s gem as her 'falling in love' dress and it's easy to imagine why. Since the dress and matching bolero were handed over with only a shy smile I'll never know the details... It was a beautiful spring day when I hung the dress and jacket on the line, but unfortunately someone else fell in love – our puppy Monty… that night I discovered the only remaining part of the bolero sticking out of Monty's mouth… I'm grateful that the dress survived Monty's affections." Dreaming of Chanel p. 242

41. Swimsuit
Label reads 'Atkins'
Hong Kong, ca.1956
Cotton
The Darnell Collection

"It was Valentine's Day 1956 and Mary Kent was sixteen when she fell in love… the swish cocktail party was in full swing when she caught the eye of a handsome young man, Steve English. No one noticed as they slipped out for a romantic rendezvous on the moonlit beach. Wearing her new pink bathing suit, Mary felt wonderfully reckless… Years later Mary told Doris that she fell deeply in love that night. And she didn't wear her pink bathing suit again until eight years later when she was on her honeymoon in Venice and had become Mrs Steve English."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 192

Illustration by Grant Cowan, watercolour and pencil on paper.

42. Dress
United States, 1929-38
Lace
The Darnell Collection

"Rebecca Edwards was eighteen when she met the man she wanted to spend the rest of her life with. It was the 1930s and Thomas Shannon had been sent to Rebecca's home town in West Virginia as a trial minister for her Parish. After two years it was clear that she and Thomas were meant for each other, but Thomas thought it inappropriate for a minister to fall in love with a member of the congregation so he tendered his resignation. The small town rose up and wrote letters protesting his resignation and begging him to stay… Thomas relented, and after marrying his beloved Rebecca, served as minister for the next ten years."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 286

43. Dress
United Kingdom, 1930-38
Lace, net
The Darnell Collection

"After Victoria Brooke married Charles Reed they settled in Boston… it was said that Victoria and her mother-in-law Eugenie were not only the same statuesque height and build, but they had the same sense of style. Eugenie was so fond of Victoria that she gave her this gown she had worn to a reception at Kensington Palace in the 1930s. Charles always said it was his favourite dress because it reminded him of the two most important women in his life."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 240

44. Dress
United States, 1940-1950
Lace, taffeta, cotton
The Darnell Collection

"Once, when Doris had finished a talk about the history of fashion at a local university, an elderly man came up and announced that, although he was legally blind and couldn't see the show very well, her stories had put paid to his plans to sneak out early… Two days later, this stunning dress arrived in the post. Enclosed was a note: 'My dear wife wore this dress. It was her favourite. I hope you will tell her story. She was my greatest love.'"
Dreaming of Chanel p. 76

45. Dress (Evening)
Label reads 'Cotillion Formals'
United States, 1960-68
Moire
The Darnell Collection

"Doris's closest friend Dorothy Steere shared her love of beautiful clothes but usually preferred to wear simple, understated outfits herself. When a very special occasion arose in the 1960s that demanded something a little more arresting… Dorothy decided it was time to really splurge. The special occasion turned out to be her wedding to her high school sweetheart. For Dorothy, yellow was the perfect choice because it symbolised a pledge of faithfulness to the one you loved."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 180

Accessories – glass cabinet

46. Attributed to the House of Worth
Handbag
France, 1890-1900
Suede, jet, sequins
The Darnell Collection

Forced to flee Russia in the late 1800s, Asta Girey ended up stranded in Hong Kong without a passport. But as Asta's ethereal beauty never escaped notice for long, she found an obliging Englishman to agree to a hasty marriage of convenience and passage to France. Soon after arriving in Paris and divorcing her rescuer, Asta found work as a companion to a French lady and began designing accessories for her… but the

ultimate accolade came from the House of Worth, and before long Asta was designing handbags like these under the famous label."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 90

47. Necklace
Afghanistan, ca.1900
Lapis Lazuli, Silver
The Darnell Collection

"This stunning necklace was Astrid Bevan's most treasured gift from her beloved husband, Berkeley. A mining engineer who had to travel constantly for his work, Berkeley made up for his long absences by seeking out a unique gift for his lovely wife on each trip... this lapis necklace from the mountains of Afghanistan was the finest, and the most romantic."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 116

48. Shoe Travelling Trunk
United States, 1929-39
Leather, metal, corduroy, suede, silk
The Darnell Collection

"In the 1930s a luxury cruise was the perfect opportunity for a society lady to show off her wardrobe... So as soon as Dorothy Carmody's husband announced he had booked tickets for them on a cruise ship from New York to Bermuda, she ordered twenty pairs of handmade shoes... and commissioned a custom-made leather travelling box with separate compartments for each pair of shoes."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 124

49. Tiffany & Co. (founded 1837)
Brooch
United States, ca.1922
Diamonds, Onyx, Platinum
The Darnell Collection

"Manly and Violet Whedbee fell in love the first day they met. They were both just sixteen. When they were engaged in 1921, Manly solemnly promised Violet that he would buy her a beautiful piece of jewellery from Tiffany & Co every year to mark the anniversary. For their first anniversary, he dutifully kept his promise with this diamond and onyx bow brooch."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 152

50. Bonnet
United States, 1860-1875
Velvet, Silk, Ostrich feathers
The Darnell Collection

"The night Sarah Emlen was born on the 12th of April, 1861, will always be remembered by her family and countless other American families… Sarah was born on the fateful night the Confederate forces fired on the Union garrison at Fort Sumter in Charleston, setting off the American Civil War."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 202

51. Elsa Schiaparelli (1890–1973)
Shoes (Evening)
France, ca.1950
Crêpe, leather
The Darnell Collection

"As flamboyant and outrageous as her chief rival Coco Chanel was elegant and minimalist, Elsa Schiaparelli was without doubt one of the most accomplished trend setters, in more ways than one… as a designer Schiaparelli was a true innovator, entrepreneur and style icon… But in the 1950s, all that mattered for women like Dorothy Asquith was that slipping on an exquisite pair of Schiaparelli shoes like these instantly made her feel like the most stylish woman at any party."
Dreaming of Chanel p.248

52. Shoes
Italy, 1980 – 89
Leather, metal
The Darnell Collecion
Dreaming of Chanel p.100

53. Slippers
United States, ca.1820
Satin, leather
The Darnell Collection

"Abigail was so light on her feet when she danced… The most important dance of her life was in 1820 aboard the steamship, The Monarch. This night, when dashing young Mr George Marino gallantly led her to the dance floor, he vowed to never leave her side, and kept his word. The evening was so special that Abigail pencilled the date and the steamer's name on the sole of her satin dancing slippers and put them lovingly away as a keepsake."
Dreaming of Chanel p.120

54. Selection of Hats
United States, 1950-69
Wool, felt, feathers, silk
The Darnell Collection

"For many women, accessories are what make an outfit. Ginny McMullin loved wildly colourful and expensive hats more than anything. In the 1950s, in between marriages, she had a boyfriend who would take her to New York and buy her $50 hats, just because he wanted to indulge her. At the time paying $50 for a hat was above and beyond – and that boyfriend was a keeper."
Dreaming of Chanel, p. 200.

55. Hermès (founded 1837) Gloves
France, 1930-39
Suede
The Darnell Collection
Dreaming of Chanel p. 246

56. Ring
Australia, 1950-60
Emerald, diamonds, platinum
The Darnell Collection

"Valerie knew her husband had an eye for the ladies, but she always believed him when he told her she was the only one. One day, a ritzy jewellery store in Sydney called Valerie to say her ring was ready to collect. The minute Valerie saw the stone she was suspicious, but she thanked the jeweller and tucked the box into her handbag… Later that evening Valerie arranged herself in the lounge and placed her ring hand just so on her hip to ensure it would be the first thing her rat of a husband would see as he walked in the door…"
Dreaming of Chanel p. 256

57. Bonnet
United Kingdom, 1820-30
Straw, Silk
The Darnell Collection

"Like all ladies of good sense and style in the 1820s, Perky Lloyd was always sure to wear a bonnet outdoors to protect her porcelain skin from the ravages of the sun. This was her best bonnet, woven by a Norfolk milliner from Leghorn straw, famous for its lightness and durability as well as its pale colour."
Dreaming of Chanel p. 272

58. Handbag
United States, 1955-65
Crocodile skin
The Darnell Collection
Dreaming of Chanel p. 134

59. Handbag
Australia, 1939-45
Felt
The Darnell Collection

"When Annouska arrived in Melbourne from Europe during WW2, strict rationing had forced women to make do without luxuries and become creative about keeping up a semblance of style… After a hard day's work as a seamstress, Annouska would collect all the scraps of fabric on the floor and create wonderful concoctions for herself and her friends. From a few scraps of felt, Annouska created this appliqué handbag to complement the Rockmans of Melbourne suit she had gone without for six months to buy."
Dreaming of Chanel p.48

60. Fan
Paris, ca.1900
Ostrich feathers, tortoiseshell, silk
The Darnell Collection

"Along with her ability to make an unforgettable entrance, Sarah Longfellow was renowned for her collection of feather fans, each more lavish than the other, commissioned from an exclusive boutique on rue de la Paix just two doors up the House of Paquin."
Dreaming of Chanel p.288

61. Bodice
United Kingdom, ca. 1899
Velvet, silk, glass and jet beads, silk cord
The Darnell Collection

"Having lived through three centuries, my English grandmother, May Stafford, had more than her fair share of Christmas mornings. One of her favourite memories as a little girl was receiving this decadent purple silk velvet bodice and a matching skirt as a present… it was 1899."
Dreaming of Chanel p.290

Ephemera Cabinet

62. Collection of Letters.
Personal letters to Doris Darnell regarding the collection, 1950 - 1985

63. Photograph
Photograph of Doris and Howard Darnell, taken while on their honeymoon in 1937 at 'Honeymoon Cottage' in West Chester, Pennsylvania.
"A wealthy Quaker donated this cottage for use by young newly married Quakers who wanted to have a honeymoon, but didn't have the funds. The cottage was a beautiful stone mill on the edge of a stream near Philadelphia. Of all coincidences, when my parents bought their first house and excitedly called up Doris and Howard to tell them about it, it was this cottage! We lived there for 25 years."
- Charlotte Smith

64. Photograph
Photograph of the Ivy Spooner wedding dress in 1956 worn by Ivy's niece, Annette Brereton.

65. Photograph
Photograph of Doris with Charlotte and her sister in Philadelphia, 1966.

66. Photograph
Photograph of Doris Darnell , 1946

67. Pamphlet
Pamphlet from 'A Century of Elegance' presented by Doris Darnell in the 1970s.

68. Collection of papers
Ephemera from the Queen Elizabeth I: Photograph of Charlotte and her siblings Sarah and Alastair; swing tag and information booklet, 1960s.

69. Paper Invitation
Invitation to Buckingham Palace, 1951, addressed to Charlotte's mother.

ii. Didactic Text

Dreaming of Chanel (main entrance)

The clothes we wear can tell precious stories about the key moments in our lives. *Dreaming of Chanel* is an exhibition that explores this idea through a unique collection of clothing and accessories presented alongside the stories of the women who wore them. From designer garments by Chanel and Dior, to the work of unknown dressmakers, each piece captures a lifetime preserved through fashionable clothing.

This exhibition represents not only the women who wore these clothes, but the lifelong passion of one woman in particular, Doris Darnell, whose collection this exhibition is drawn entirely from. Spanning over 200 years, the Darnell Collection is a unique social history; for each piece that Doris was given a story was recorded, mapping the lives of countless women through their most treasured items of clothing.

In 2003, aged 87, Doris bequeathed her Pennsylvania-based collection to Australia-based Goddaughter Charlotte Smith. Since that time, Charlotte has continued Doris's dedication and devotion to the history of fashion and the Darnell Collection; now considered the largest private vintage and antique clothing collection in Australia. Drawing on Charlotte Smith's second book about the Darnell Collection, this exhibition presents over sixty garments and accessories dating from 1820-2007, along with a selection of original illustrations by Grant Cowan.

The exhibition explores the collection through four themes – A History of Women; F is for Fashion; Things I Treasure; and Love Stories. These themes represent the nature of the stories passed on to Doris by the women whose clothing she received. Each garment tells a tale, from key moments in the social history of women to precious love stories from generations past.

A History of Women (room 1)

Moments of historic significance, graduation balls and funeral processions…

While the women present at these events have passed on, the items of clothing they chose to wear remain as markers of the history of particular women in countries like Australia, The United Kingdom and The United States. Whether precious gowns of silk and lace, a linen suit or simple wool dress, these garments bore witness to moments both spectacular and ordinary. These stories illuminate a range of women's experiences, and provide a small snapshot of how women's lives have changed in a little over a century.

F is for Fashion (room 2)
Designers and dressmakers…
Spanning over a century, these garments illustrate fashion's desire to both change and endure. While present-day fashion is fast-paced and regularly mass-produced, a woman in Edwardian times would rely on the craftsmanship of a single dressmaker to create the most fashionable garments of the day by hand, which could take more than six months to complete. In the 1940s, fashion was utilised by women to send a covert political message. And in the 1960s the first glimpse of 'throw-away' fashion was produced with the brief popularity of the paper dress. Here we see the paradoxical nature of fashion and glimpse its many incarnations.

Things I Treasure (room 3)
The materiality of clothing can invite us to instil garments with identities, histories and memories. As such, garments often become signifiers of important milestones and can also become evocative of particular places and people. Thus our relationship to a seemingly idle garment can symbolise much more. Clothing often outlives the moment or person whose memories had originally imbued the garment with special meaning. The Darnell Collection is largely based on this premise, where the collection itself survives and recounts the lives and events of times past, captured and preserved in each garment and its story.

Love Stories (room 4)
Weddings, first dates and infidelity…

Like love letters from the past, these garments reveal precious moments preserved and cherished. Many garments in the Darnell Collection reveal real-life love stories, both tragic and touching, which Doris faithfully recorded and guarded. Here clothing becomes the tangible embodiment of powerful emotion, kept as a witness and reminder of devotion, betrayal and intimacy.

iii. Installation Images

Figure 162. ***Dreaming of Chanel*****, exhibition install, 2011.**

Figure 163. Dreaming of Chanel, exhibition install, 2011.

Figure 164. Dreaming of Chanel, exhibition install (dressed mannequins waiting to enter galleries), 2011.

Figure 165. Dreaming of Chanel, exhibition install (dressed mannequins waiting to enter galleries), 2011.